

The alignment between Curriculum Objectives and Assessment of isiXhosa at Grade 12

Level

By

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

In the new South Africa (after 1994), the education system required an extensive overhaul to ensure that the inequalities of the past do not continue to dominate the education system. As a result, a number of debates took place and in 1998 a new educational model that is competency based was introduced (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999). The main aim of this change was to ensure that the curriculum would integrate academic and vocational skills. The other aims was to ensure that the new education system represent a complete opposite of the apartheid education system. Language, being central to education, is one of the areas that were totally overhauled.

It is therefore the aim of this study, to investigate whether the expectations of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), articulated through curriculum objectives and expected outcomes, are fulfilled at grade 12 level, with a particular focus on isiXhosa language as a Home language. This study aims to investigate the alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment through an interrogation of the curriculum aims and assessment tools. A combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed. The data was collected using questionnaires targeting specific questions that relate to the teachers' and learners' awareness of both the curriculum aims and the assessment thereof. The focus for this particular study was on the National Curriculum statement (NCS) and grade 12 isiXhosa Home Language papers. The reason for this selection was that it provided a number of years, which made tracking progress much easier. Findings show that although there seems to be alignment between the curriculum objectives as well as the aims, there were also notable similarities between different languages of South Africa including Afrikaans and English, meaning that the NCS sets the same objectives for all Home languages, something which requires further investigation but beyond the scope of this study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
DoE	Department of Education
C2005	Curriculum 2005
Exams	Examinations
L	Learner
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PEI	Presidential Education Initiative
rNCS	revised National Curriculum Statement
T	Teacher
NSC	National Senior Certificate

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of outcomes-based education is based on the notion of knowledge, skills and values that learners should acquire and demonstrate during the learning experience DoE (2005). The assessment is intended to measure how much of the expected knowledge, skills and values have been acquired. Because of the emphasis on the outcomes, an examination of whether there is an alignment between the expected outcomes and the assessment becomes necessary in any given context. In the context of languages, this becomes particularly important as language is central to the acquisition of knowledge, skills as well as values. Language is equally important in assessing experiences.

The primary aim of this study is therefore to assess whether the expectations of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), articulated through curriculum objectives and expected outcomes are fulfilled at Grade 12 level with a particular focus on the isiXhosa language as a home language. The approach employed in this study is two-pronged. Firstly, the study focuses on the question of the validity and reliability of the assessment tools. The study aims to investigate alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment through teachers' and learners' perspectives. In particular, the study investigates whether the assessment tools test the intended outcomes and whether these tools are implemented in a systematic way. Secondly, the study looks at the question of whether the test tools produce consistent results over a number of years since the inception of Outcomes Based Education's Grade 12 external examinations. The general questions addressed in this study are:

1. What are the stated curriculum objectives for isiXhosa as a home language?
2. To what extent are these objectives aligned with assessment?

3. To what extent are the assessment tools reliable and valid?
4. What role do language teachers play in the development of the curriculum objectives design?
5. To what extent do teachers have a clear understanding of why curriculum objectives are necessary?

1.2 Area of Investigation

This study investigates whether there is an alignment between the curriculum objectives and assessment in isiXhosa home language in the Western Cape, particularly township schools within the Cape Peninsular. The interest in this particular area of study was triggered by consistently poor Matric results for isiXhosa Home language. Poor outcomes, measured roughly by pass rates and symbols achieved, probably signify a misalignment between curriculum objectives and assessment. It is therefore the aim of this study to test the hypothesis of whether the poor results could be linked to misalignment. The trend in the isiXhosa results gives a general indication that there is cause for concern regarding assessment of this subject. This study hopes to open debates within this area and begin to unpack some of the reasons behind the poor results.

Webb (2010) argues that alignment means different things when used in different contexts. Webb further argues that within education, alignment is defined as the degree to which expectations [i.e. standards] and assessments are in agreement and serve in conjunction with one another to guide the system toward students learning what they are expected to know and do. The assessment is an overall process of ensuring that there is alignment between learning curriculum objectives and assessment. According to Webb (2010), the alignment of expectations for student learning with assessments for measuring students' attainment of these expectations is an essential attribute for an effective standards-based education system. Webb (2010) further points out that "education systems are easily fragmented and teachers

and students often receive mixed messages regarding goals and expectations. “In the absence of clear principles of alignment, learning expectations can be lowered for some students while being raised for others, thus creating potential inequities” (Webb 2010).

Indeed Webb’s observations about inequalities that may be created by confusion are synonymous with our current education system. According to Chisholm (2003), in the new curriculum, the emphasis is more on the use of the curriculum design tools and less on the subject content. This may be one of the issues that cause some confusion amongst teachers who are used to emphasising the content. These thoughts guided some of the questions related to the subject content in the collection of data.

In an effort to ensure that learning outcomes are clearly articulated, the Department of Education (DoE) revised the OBE curriculum, into the Revised National Curriculum Statement (rNCS). The rNCS aims to produce a learner who is able to listen, speak, read and achieve a comprehension level that shows evidence of communication competence, linguistic competence as well as sociolinguistic competence. These are some of the objectives for language learners, which are central to assessment. Failure to meet these objectives stems from a number of factors. One is the lack of knowledge due to lack of access to the documents containing these objectives. The other is non-compliance. There are various reasons that support non-compliance. In a study on learning objectives across all learning areas, Chisholm (2003) encourages teachers to teach according to the pace and interest of each learner rather than teaching to the test. According to Vandeyar and Killen (2007) the most productive way of ensuring teaching according to learners’ pace is by using the pace that they think can be fair to both slow and fast learners. This is a challenging approach given that students are usually at different levels. Vandeyar and Killen (2007) further argue that the main challenge in assessment is to find the approach that will be fair to all learners and provide reliable evidence from which valid conclusions can be made about the learning of

each learner. Questions that target these statement discussed above are addressed in the questionnaire.

1.3 Research Methodology

The interviews were conducted with Grade 12 learners and teachers at three different high schools. Each high school had an average of about 30 learners in each class. In addition to the questionnaire, previous question papers were analysed to get an idea of the technique that specific curriculum uses to ask questions. An elaborate research methodology will be discussed in chapter three.

1.4 Definition of terms

Any study that use terms such as alignment, curriculum aims and objectives, validity and other similar terms can cause a lot of confusion. It is therefore the aims of this section to provide working definitions for the main terms used in the study.

1.4.1 Alignment

Webb (2002:1) defines alignment as the degree to which expectations and assessments are in agreement and serve in conjunction with one another to guide the system toward student learning to what they are expected to know and do. La Marca (2001:2) describes alignment as “the degree to which assessments yield results that provide accurate information about student performance regarding academic content standards at the desired level of detail, to meet the purposes of the assessment system”. La Marca, P. M., Redfield, D., Winter, P. C., & Despriet, L. (2000) adds that in an aligned educational system, the assessments must allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge and skills with respect to the expectations set out in the curriculum frameworks so that proper interpretations of their performance can be made. Martone and Sireci (2009) describe alignment as a means for understanding the degree to

which different components of an educational system work together to support a common goal.

According to Webb (2007), to estimate curriculum alignment, the Taxonomy Table is used with analysis of a group of objectives, as well as a variety of instructional activities. Examining instructional activities, one has to ask questions like ‘what is the student supposed to learn from their participation in the activity? What knowledge is to be acquired or constructed? What cognitive processes are to be employed? (Webb, 2007). Such questions require both classroom observation as well as an interrogation of the instructional activities. The definition applied in this study, that which understands alignment, in broader terms, as the degree to which assessments yield results that reflect the student performance regarding academic content standards at the desired level of detail, to meet the purposes of the assessment system. In language, we view these academic content standard as being the ability to show proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and achieving a comprehension level that shows evidence of communication competence, linguistic competence as well as sociolinguistic competence.

1.4.2 Assessment

On Wiggins (1993) assessment is described as comprehensive and multisided analysis of performance, which must be judgment-based and personal. According to Webb (2010), assessment is an overall process to ensure alignment between learning objectives and classroom practice. Webb (2010) further describes assessment as a form of clinical analysis and prediction of performance. According to Brown, Bull, & Pendlebury (1997) assessment is taking of a sample of what students do and making inferences and estimate the worth of their actions. Cross, Mungandi & Rouhani (2002) point out that assessment criteria provide evidence that the learners have achieved the specific outcomes. Government Gazette No 29467 of 2006 describes assessment as the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting

information to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of learners. According to this Government Gazette (2006), assessment is based on the principles of OBE. This argument further states that assessment should be carefully designed to cover the learning areas and assessment standards of the learning program or area or subject and it must also ensure that it assesses a variety of skills. One important aspect of assessment is that it should be appropriate to the age and the developmental level of the learners in the phase.

1.4.3 Outcomes Based Education (OBE)

Cross, Mungandi, & Rouhani (2002: 176) describe “OBE as a global educational curriculum reform phenomenon with adaptations and local responses in South Africa whose origins and evolution can be traced to competency based debates in Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, Canada and limited circles in the United States”. Cross et al (2002: 176) further points out that “OBE is part of a flow of ideas that through globalisation processes have gained echo in different contexts and express converging trends in educational systems through the world”. Cross et al (2002) argue that OBE can be traced within the labour movement that sought to overhaul the educational system and incorporate an integrated approach to education and training.

According to Jansen (1999), history shows that OBE did not just come as a coherent and a comprehensive curriculum reform in South Africa, it originally came out of a number of influences that led to confusion and contradiction. In my view, because of the above mentioned confusion and contradiction, curriculum planners may find difficulties in implementing the expected curriculum policy. Politically, if one were to evaluate education in South Africa by looking back from the apartheid era to the post-apartheid era one would see

that it wouldn't be an easy task to implement curriculum policy. Hence, there were those confusions and contradictions.

As indicated in the opening paragraph of this section, terms mean different things in different contexts. According to Malcolm (1999), the meaning of OBE is dependent on the context within which it is used. Vandeyar and Killen (2007) assess OBE as the most direct and obvious influence on the conceptions that education has of learning, teaching and assessment. Teaching and learning cannot be a done process without assessment which according to Chisholm (2003) is viewed as an integral part.

Further, Chisholm (2003) points out that there were different views about OBE. Few educationists in South Africa decided not to take a position either for or against OBE; Chisolm further argues that writers like Mohamed (1998), Malcolm (1999) and Odora-Hoppers (2002) have defended OBE, whereas others such as Kraak (2001) have been critical. Others have questioned its foundation. Some see it as narrowing and de-radicalisation of educational goals.

According to Chisholm (2003), the idea of outcomes seeks to identify the learners that will be able to identify and solve problems, learners that are able to work effectively with the others, that are able to manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively. It pictures the learners that can collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information, learners that communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and language skills in various modes. Listed above is part of the provision that is carried by the outcomes to transform learners.

According to Asmal (1999) OBE is an approach that embraces the capacity of learners to think for themselves, to learn from the environment, and to respond to wide guidance by teachers who value creativity and self-motivated learning.

It is clear from this brief historical background that OBE was not as widely welcomed and accepted as it was made out to be. The fact that the outcomes were based on context, allowed much room for variation from school to school. While this may be a good thing as it highlights the “personal” aspect as well as the “pace” of each learner being taken into consideration, it made a uniform assessment quite a challenge. It is the aim of this study to look at whether and how this “personal” area was addressed through a uniform assessment.

1.4.4 Curriculum 2005

One of the ways of understanding Curriculum 2005 and understanding how it relates to the political situation is by looking at Chisholm paper which looks at the politics of curriculum review in South Africa. In her introduction Chisholm (2003: 1) points out that

C2005 and the Revised National Curriculum Statement were two steps in the process of curriculum revision undertaken since 1994. Curriculum revision was undertaken in three main stages or waves: the first involved the ‘cleansing’ of the curriculum of its racist and sexist elements in the immediate aftermath of the election. The second involved the implementation of outcomes-based education through C2005. And the third involved the review and revision of C2005 in the light of recommendations made by a Ministerial Review Committee appointed in 2000 (Jansen, 1999; Cross, 2002; Chisholm, 2003).

In the next couple of paragraphs we look at how the three waves relate to the current study and how these changes may in one way or another affected the alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment.

Curriculum 2005, unlike OBE according to Taylor & Vinjevoold (1999), was the new South African curriculum model introduced in 1997 which is competency-based. Changing of South Africa to a democratic country meant a change to everything, education in particular. Negotiations took place between the apartheid government and the minister of education of a democratic South Africa about new education system. Curriculum 2005 was introduced in 1997. According to Chisholm (2003), this policy was accompanied by three critical elements: the introduction of eight new learning areas with the values of democracy, non-racialism and

non-sexism, outcomes-based education (OBE) and the provision of a foundation in general education up to and including the ninth Grade. During the negotiations, the big issue was to come with the ideas about reconstruction of education system. This is where according to Chisholm (2003), the basis of the vision of a core curriculum, which would integrate academic and vocational skills, was provided. The National Qualitative Forum (NQF) which was formed in 1997 carries the re-visioning of how the system of apartheid education could be changed in order to represent a complete opposite of all the significance of the apartheid education, Chisholm (2003).

Chisholm (2003) further argues that one of the significance of Curriculum 2005 is to address the damage in South Africa's education during the apartheid era.

Curriculum 2005 was implemented to represent a compromise between old and new forces. The social context of the curriculum was underplayed and its design and development was decentralised. There were new elements and continuities with curriculum policy proposal in 1994. Curriculum 2005 gave the principles which emphasise on giving full commitment to human-resource development, learner centeredness, relevance and integration, differentiation, redress and learner support, nation building, non-discrimination, creativity and critical thinking, flexibility, progression, credibility and quality assurance, Chisholm (2003)

Curriculum 2005 came with good ideas, although according to Chisholm (2003) there was still much that needed more attention. There was still much criticism. Teachers found difficulties in operationalising new modes of assessment. Many researchers viewed Curriculum 2005 as a failure. Scholars Greenstein (1998) and Jansen (1999b) argue that terminology in the curriculum was a challenging issue such that teachers, schools and even commentators struggled with it, Chisholm (2003). Teachers experienced difficulties in

operationalising new modes of assessment. According to Chisholm (2003), findings showed that the South Africa's learner achievement remained exceptionally poor despite the change of the curriculum. The capacity of learner achievement was not improved but damaged.

Some of the critics of C2005 claim that it tackled the form of the curriculum instead of its content. According to Chisholm (2003), the implementers had chosen the wrong object to tackle. Because of the few difficulties mentioned above, the minister of education Professor Asmal decided to call the committee to review the curriculum in 2000. According to Chisholm (2003), the reasons for doing so were as follows:

- ☐ To investigate the structure of the curriculum.
- ☐ To investigate its level of understanding.
- ☐ How implementation could be strengthened
- ☐ What needed to be done about the implementation envisaged for 2001

Interviews were done and some issues, like the implementation of the curriculum structure and design, the lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy and inadequate orientation, training and development of teachers were voiced out. To address these issues, the review committee proposed a revised curriculum structure. This structure would be supported by changes in teacher orientation and training, learner- support materials and the organisation, and staffing of curriculum structures and functions in national and provincial education departments. In order to address overcrowding of the curriculum in GET, reduction of learning areas from 8 to 6 was proposed. Languages and mathematics were to be given more time. In order to address problems related to the complexity of the curriculum design and terminology, the review committee was proposed. The recommendation was that

the proposed National Curriculum Statement should keep some design features and drop the majority.

1.4.5 The National Curriculum Statement (NCS)

According to DoE (2007) the review of Curriculum 2005 led to the development of a Revised National Curriculum Statement (rNCS) for Grades R- 9 and National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for Grades 10 – 12. The NCS consists of 29 subject statements whose draft versions were published for comments in 2001. For the National Senior Certificate, a Qualification on level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was developed which provided the requirements for promotion at the end of Grades 10 and 11. The aim was also for the awarding of the National Senior Certificate at the end of Grade 12. The document also came as a replacement for the Overview and the Qualifications and Assessment Policy Framework, which were the original NCS documents, The DoE (2007).

The DoE (2007) highlighted the learning program guidelines as a useful tool to assist with planning for the Curriculum. It is stated in DoE (2007) that there is use of guidelines which consisted of three different sections each carrying its aim to help with planning. According to DoE (2007), the first section should be there to assist teachers and schools in planning for the introduction of the National Curriculum Statement. The second section aimed at dealing with giving suggestions on how teaching a particular subject may help underpin the National Curriculum Statement. The third section aimed to suggest how schools and teachers might plan for the introduction of the NCS carefully to ensure the high attaining skills, high knowledge goals of the National Curriculum Statement,

The DoE (2007) emphasised integration within and across the subject as one of the most important factors of the National Curriculum Statement. Three phases of the Learning Programme include Subject Framework, Work Schedules and Lesson Plans. In the Subject

Framework it is recommended that teachers should work together for the three grades; Grades 10- 12 in order to come to the understanding of the content of the subject. Working together would lead to the development of Work Schedules, which is the second phase of the learning programme. This phase should indicate the sequence in which the content and the context will be presented in a particular grade. The last phase is the division of the work schedules into units. Those units are Lesson Plans. Learning Programme must therefore be a reflection of the core content of the National Curriculum.

In terms of languages, home language in particular, the curriculum aims to develop a strong relationship between languages and the NCS by establishing a society based on democratic values, justice and fundamental human rights, DoE (2007). The language curriculum aims to raise awareness of the positive value of cultural and linguistic diversity and to foster respect for the languages and cultures of the people. Articulation of the indigenous knowledge in languages is emphasised, DoE (2007).

1.4.6 The Revised National Curriculum Statement (rNCS)

Following the critiques of Curriculum 2005, one of the ideas of the rNCS was to reduce curriculum development features from eight to three. The rNCS was also aimed to align curriculum and assessment. According to the report by the National Qualification Framework (NQF), the rNCS was not a new curriculum but a streamlining and strengthening of C2005. In terms of high level of skills and knowledge, the rNCS aims at high development. It was reported that there should be links within and across learning outcomes and learning areas. In 2000, C2005 was re-defined through the formulation of curriculum statements rNCS specific to each subject (DoE 2002).

The draft rNCS was released in 2001 for comments. It became a policy in 2002. In this statement, a right-based approach to citizens and nation building was stressed. According to Chisholm (2003), one of the reasons for the proposal was to address problems related to the

complexity of C2005 design and its terminology as indicated in the preceding sections. Ministerial Project Committees were established between October 2000 and 2002 to revise the curriculum for Grades R-9 and then the revision for Grades 10-12 were to follow the completion of the revision of the first Grade, Chisholm (2003).

1.4.7 Validity

One of the terms that come up when one is dealing with alignment is validity. Regarding validity, assessors need to ask themselves whether the method of assessment is valid or appropriate. AERA, (1985) which deals with standards for educational tests, states that validity always refers to the degree to which evidence supports the inferences that are made from the score. Ross (2005: 39) refers to validity as “the most important characteristic to consider when constructing or selecting a test or measurement technique. A valid test measures what is intended to measure and it must always be examined with respect to the use of which is to be made of the values obtained from the measurement procedure”. Ross (2005: 41) further describes validity as “the degree to which a measuring procedure gives consistent results and that a reliable test is a test, which would provide a consistent set of scores for a group of individuals if it were administered independently on several occasions”.

In line with AERA (1985) and Ross (2005), there are important components of validity. The first part is the Content validity in which the test accurately reflects the syllabus on which it is based. Secondly there is Face validity whereby learners and teachers give their evaluation of the test whether it was reasonable or not, questions that seek to investigate the above argument are addressed in the data questions. The third part is Concurrent validity and this is where the test gives similar results to existing tests that have already been validated.

Questions which ask scores that learners obtained in two different tests are used to support the above argument¹.

1.4.8 Reliability

Tied to alignment and validity is reliability. According to Luckett and Sutherland (2000), reliability concerns the issue of consistency in assessment. Shumway and Harden (2003:572) describe reliability as “the extent to which examinees’ scores would be similar if they were retested”. The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) (2000), argue that if the test is repeated over time, then the new test results should be similar to the earlier scores for the same assessment instrument on the same group of individuals. The above statement is also supported by the argument which states that the reliability of a test is an estimate of the consistency of its marks, a reliable test is one where a learner will get the same mark if she or he takes the test possibly with a different examiner. It is further argued that reliability and validity are closely related. A test cannot be considered valid unless the measurements resulting from it are reliable².

1.4.9 Home Language

According to the curriculum statement issued by the department of education (NCS 2011), home language is the language that is first acquired by the learner at home. In traditional terms, this is the language which is also referred to as a “mother-tongue”. Since it is the language that is first acquired by a child, it happens to be the language in which the learners learn and think. According to the DoE (2011), this language may be used as a language of

¹ www.tedpower.co.uk/esl0736.html

² www.slidesherc.net/sancruz5/validity-reliability-practicality?related=1

learning and teaching, also known as medium of instruction. Learners are expected to develop reading and writing on top of their listening and speaking skills in this language. Learners are also expected to use home language appropriately in real-life context, a component referred to as communication as well as sociolinguistic competence. It is expected therefore that learners will interpret social situations, choose from a number of available language varieties in order to use language in a socially appropriate manner.

1.5 Outline of the study

Chapter 1 introduces the study by providing a brief background of a research problem, aims and objectives of the study and a brief overview of terms under consideration.

In chapter 2, a detailed literature review is provided. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of this study, Chapter 2 is divided into three sections. Section 1, provides a brief background of C2005. In addition the objectives and challenges including assessment challenges that C2005 is faced with are discussed and some of the proposed solutions for C2005 are discussed. Section 2 of Chapter 2 discusses the emergence of the National Curriculum Statement including the discussions about languages before 1994. The section also outlines language objectives after the implementation of the NCS. Challenges of the NCS are also discussed in this section. In section 3 of Chapter 2, matric results before and after the NCS are discussed, graphs are provided to give more explanation and illustrations of the results. Factors affecting pass rates are outlined as well as the proposed solutions. The importance of alignment is discussed in this chapter.

In chapter 3, a detailed research methodology is provided. At the beginning of the chapter, an introduction is given which highlights a brief summary of the research questions. Demographics and access are described given the fact that they have a direct influence on the

design of the research tools. Research procedures like interviews and question papers are tabled. In addition, the reasons for the distribution of questionnaires as well as challenges are also provided. Types of participants are given, with the aim to give a specific reason for choosing the chosen participants. Different types of questions used to collect data are also discussed.

In chapter 4, the results of the current study as well as a detailed data analysis are provided. Chapter 5, the concluding chapter, answers the research questions. Citations of a few questions from different isiXhosa question papers are given in order to give answer to some of the research questions. Learners' and teachers' responses to the questionnaires are discussed. Chapter 6 is a conclusion and some recommendations as well as directions for future research are given.

1.6 The Shortcomings of the study

As we have already indicated in the preceding sections, alignment requires an investigation and interrogation of the curriculum, the assessment tools, classroom practice as well as access to the perceptions of the parties involved. Because of the preliminary nature of the study, as well as time and access constraints, it was not possible to interview subject advisors as well as observe classroom practise. Also, because of the pressures on Grade 12 teachers, much of the learning takes place between February and September, as a result, school principals are not willing to have classes observed. Secondly, because the study investigates grade 12, access to the answer sheets is restricted. We are also aware of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which forms the part of the National Curriculum Statements Grades R- 12. Since the data was collected in 2012 before CAPS becomes effective in Grade 12, therefore CAPS is not the part of the study. We do hope however, that

this study will inspire those who have access to this information to be proactive and fill in the knowledge gap.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is a review of literature relevant to the education system in South Africa. Whereas the focus of this study is on National Curriculum Statement, the study will draw on some elements of OBE as a way of understanding its relation to NCS. First, the chapter outlines Curriculum 2005, particularly the definition, challenges and proposed solutions to those challenges. Secondly, the chapter outlines the National Curriculum Statement, its emergence, assessment and languages before and after the National curriculum Statement. Lastly, the chapter discusses the matric results generally before and after the National Curriculum Statement.

To date there are no studies that have looked at this kind of research although a number of studies have discussed curriculum developments in different forms. In the previous chapter, the main issues were introduced briefly, it is therefore the aim of this chapter to discuss the issues in detail as they relate to the study of isiXhosa as Home Language. As part of this discussion, we highlight the issues around Outcomes Based Education (OBE), Curriculum 2005(C2005), National Curriculum Statement (NCS) including their failures and successes.

Section 2 is dedicated to the emergence of the NCS, statements on languages before and after the NCS as well as language objectives in the NCS. The section also discusses challenges of the NCS including its system of assessment. Section 3 discusses matric results before the NCS, during the NCS and matric results after the implementation of the NCS, factors

affecting matric results as well as solutions are also discussed. Graphs are also used as a quick illustration of the matric results.

2.1 Curriculum 2005 and OBE

For an ordinary person, OBE and C2005 are often seen as one and the same thing. While it is difficult to precisely pin down the differences between the two, it is much easier talking about how they relate to each other. One of the most elaborate papers that provides a historical account of the two is the Ministerial Report on Curriculum (2000). The report summarizes C2005 as : “ OBE curriculum derived from nationally agreed on critical cross-field outcomes that sketch our vision of a transformed society and the role education has to play in creating it” (Ministerial Report (2005:8). In order to clearly understand this intertwined relationship, it is important to look at some of the developments and stages of C2005:

- The syllabus revision and subject rationalisation processes of the National Education and Training Forum immediately following the election in 1994
- The development of the National Qualifications Framework prior to and immediately after the election resulting in the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority in October 1995 which became operational in 1996
- The creation of two curriculum advisory bodies (the National Curriculum Development Committee in 1995 and the Curriculum Management Committee in 1996), which initiated two investigations that produced a new curriculum framework for General Education and Training
- The approval by the Council of Education Ministers of the new curriculum framework produced by the National Curriculum Development Committee in February 1996
- The operationalisation of the new national curriculum process in the General Education and Training Phase in 1996

- The preparation of illustrative learning programmes and other documents and materials as well as training of trainers in 1997
- The implementation of a national pilot, as well as a national in-service education programme for teachers at 30 schools between 1 July and 31 December 1997
- Implementation in 1998

(adapted from the Ministerial Report on Curriculum 2000:2-3)

A quick look at the above summary indicates that OBE, NQF as well as C2005 go hand-in-hand. In 1997, Curriculum 2005 was introduced as the first version of the new curriculum for the General Education Band into the Foundation Phase, DoE (2008). Curriculum 2005 was a departure from apartheid curriculum and a representation of a paradigm shift from content-based teaching and learning to outcomes based one (Cross, 2002). Central to the development of C2005 was its objectives, to which I now turn.

2.1.1 Curriculum 2005's Objectives

Curriculum 2005 was implemented under the agreement to fulfil certain objectives. One of the objectives was to develop learners that would at later stage become independent grownups those who will be able to face the challenges that may be encountered in the outside world. In addition, one of the objectives of C2005 was to produce learners who will be able to identify and solve problems using creative and critical thinking (Cross et al (2002). The objective also shows that learners will then be able to think critically about any challenges in life irrespective of how difficult the challenges could be. C2005 also aims to develop learners who will be able to work effectively with others in a team, group, organisation and community, Cross et al (2002). As stated before, education has far-reaching effects in the workplace, therefore the idea of preparing learners in this holistic manner is a perfect idea for them to develop the skill of becoming useful in the groups they will be

working with. Curriculum 2005 was developed with the aim to train learners to be able to collect, analyse, organise, and critically evaluate information (Cross et al 2002). This shows the importance of learning a language, and the role a home language in particular, may play. For a learner to be able to identify problems and think critically, they need good learning and listening skills and of course with excellent knowledge and understanding of the language. Through those skills, learners will gain confidence.

2.1.2 C2005 Challenges

All the reasons and aims for the change of the curriculum may be put under one umbrella which is the “learners’ achievement”. All the efforts are done to improve learners’ achievement to make sure that every learner receives better education and achieves well. The question is whether there is any kind of improvement since the change of the curriculum. According to Chisholm (2003), findings show that South Africa’s learner achievement remained exceptionally poor despite curriculum change.

Chisholm (2003:275) argues that it was highly critical of C2005 and its associated dimensions, particularly the proscription against the use of text books and the nature of outcomes- based assessment methods. Chisholm (2003) further states that the message of the President’s Education Initiative (PEI) report was that C2005 was not improving the capacity of learner achievement. Sharing the same sentiment, Cross et al (2002) argues that at the design level there seem to be consensus that Curriculum 2005 fell short of constituting an effective curriculum framework for teachers and learners. Firstly, according to Cross et al (2002), C2005 focuses too much on outcomes and neglected issues of content that were left to individual teachers to construct. It is a clear fact that, for successful teaching and learning, content has to be taken as a foundation. In that case, teaching, learning and curriculum assessment including curriculum objectives may be well aligned. According to Alton-Lee, A

& Nuthall, G (1992) in terms of measuring student achievement, what students are taught is more important than how they are taught.

Christie (1999) argues that Curriculum 2005 was poorly planned and hastily introduced in schools with teachers being unprepared with inadequate resources. Potenza & Monyokolo (1999) maintain that there was also a lack of alignment between curriculum development, teacher development and supply of learning material and that led to the poor implementation of the curriculum.

Abolishing the use of textbooks whereas there were still many teachers that recommended the use of textbooks is one of the contributing factors in the failing of C2005 (Chisholm (2003). The use of textbooks by the teachers and the abolishing of the textbooks by the curriculum implementers seemingly caused an imbalance in terms of transferring knowledge by the teachers and assessment by the curriculum implementers. Unfortunately, learners are on the losing side as they are taught according to the textbook and the assessment may be designed and aligned with the new teaching tools, which excludes textbooks. This area caused much concern because there is a possibility of lack of alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment, if there is no agreement on textbooks. Many teachers still believe in the use of textbooks, therefore abolishing textbooks makes teaching and learning a very challenging part of the whole process of education for both learners and teachers. That indeed has lead to very poor learners 'performance.

With teachers not understanding the curriculum terminology as stated in Chisholm (2003), the concern goes much more on the learners understanding. With the same sentiment, Christie (1999) as well as Jansen (1999b) argue that C2005 has been criticised for using inaccessible language to teachers who are supposed to implement it. The above statement inspired one of the questions raised in this study, one that investigates whether teachers

understand the new curriculum. If the curriculum is complex to the teachers, how is it possible for the teachers to transfer good quality knowledge to the learners?

The concern about the complexity of language is also raised by Christie (1999) and Jansen (1999) when claiming that one of the criticisms of C2005 is the use of inaccessible language to teachers who are supposed to implement the curriculum.

Another objective of the C2005 is that the learners should be able to use language skills effectively (Cross et al 2002). Looking at the teaching time (4.5hours per week) allocated for home language for Grade 10 to Grade 12, and in that time span, learners are expected to have acquired listening, reading, writing, presenting and speaking skills. This objective raises a lot of questions, particularly when one is looking at the objectives against the time allocated for the learning area. Is there any possibility that the assessors will consider the shortness of time, or will they assume that teaching was done at the given time regardless of what has been covered and what has not been covered due to the shortage of time?

In line with the above statement about time constraints, Cross, Mungandi & Rouhani (2002: 182) argue that C2005 is an example of a bureaucratic-driven process of curriculum reform, which has resulted in deficiencies. Too much alignment to socio-economic concerns at the expense of knowledge concerns, highly regulated framework, over specification of outcomes, under-specification of content and knowledge basis and limitation of teachers participation in the conceptual and design of the curriculum are the deficiencies that contributed on the failure of the curriculum (Cross et al 2002). As stated before, leaving teachers behind in the implementation of the curriculum may create problems for the classroom. Teachers are representatives of the curriculum as they are the only body making the curriculum work practically in front of the learners, in other words, they are the only tool to access knowledge to learners practically. This is clear indication of misalignment between theory and practice.

Keeping teachers in a closet would mean that there is only one side that is working on the curriculum and that side is the theoretical one and the practical side is lacking.

Another challenge has to do with the preparing and training of teachers before and during the implementation phase. According to Cross et al (2002), poor training of teachers and lack of resources made it difficult for teachers to know what to teach. Curriculum implementers expected learners to have acquired the expected knowledge, but with teachers not knowing what to teach, the learners would not acquire the expected knowledge. Assessment questions would be formed without considering the fact that learners might have not acquired the knowledge as set out in the curriculum objectives. Thus directly resulting in high failure rates. It becomes worse if the teachers as stated in Cross et al (2002) lack clarity on how the most emphasised outcomes should be achieved. All what is there is the policy overloaded with jargon and limited transfer of learning into classrooms. Chisholm (2003) supports the notion that the use of vague language may have an impact on the lack of clarity of C2005 to the teachers. The argument is that a majority of public submissions to the Review Committee indicated that the terminology in the C2005 document creates a number of problems. Out of those problems two are highlighted, the first problem is the use of a vague language. The following problem according to Chisholm (2003) is the replacement of the commonly understood terms with unfamiliar terms like “learners” for “pupil”, “educators” for “teachers” etcetera. Secondly, according to Chisholm (2003), different users use same terms for different meanings. This may cause confusion to those people who do not know and understand the terminology.

2.1.3 Proposed Solutions: C2005

Young (2002: 34) claim that C2005 was riddled with complexities. He argues that the complexity in the C2005 is found in the system of curriculum tools - the 66 specific outcomes, the range statements, the assessment criteria, the performance indicators, the phase organisers and the expected level of performance. Young (2002:34) further argues that teachers are likely to be overwhelmed by the new tools and end up over-specifying requirements for learners in the form of tasks so that students become task-oriented than syllabus-oriented and the curriculum becomes no more learner-centred.

Young (2002) compares the old curriculum of old South Africa with the curriculum in UK. Young further argues that both UK and South Africa used to have oppressive curricula, which denied the progress of poor children. According to Young (2002) both curricula were based on a number of principles that would assume that only a given proportion of learners are able to succeed. Learners were used to be first given an entrance tests to write. According Young (2002) all the process was done to limit the range of abilities of students in any programme.

As an outcomes-based curriculum, C2005 has to make sure that the outcomes guarantee the quality or else look for other alternatives. The alternative is to see the curriculum as a set of guidelines rather than outcomes,(Young 2002:35). The teachers have to be given more responsibility to interpret the guidelines (Young 2002). The more responsible the teachers are in the implementation of the curriculum, the more chances of alignment and the more chances of alignment can lead to a better learning achievement. The involvement of teachers would require that teachers be given opportunities to improve, get training as well as access to professional development (Young 2002:35). As mentioned before, teachers are the main source of practical knowledge and involving them in the curriculum implementation can

make it easier for learners to acquire what the implementers want them to achieve at the end of the process of learning and teaching.

Young (2002) recommends the linkage between school and university teachers and between school teachers and employers. As preparing learners for higher education is one of the curriculum objectives, the above statement can help prepare students for tertiary level. Teachers and learners can start working with skills that would prepare learners for tertiary education while they are still at Grade 12 level. This preparation is aimed at decreasing the number of learners who excel at Grade 12 and yet fail their first year of tertiary education.

As one of the principles of OBE, aiming for high quality is illustrated by Cross et al (2002) where they claim that OBE is also the integration of education and training, and it also tried to align school work with work place. The integration within and across the disciplines as specified by Cross et al (2002) was also a concern that the curriculum assessment needs to consider when preparing assessments. Learners should be assessed in a way that would make them use the knowledge from another learning area. On the other hand, the integration across the learning areas may cause some confusion. The learners may find it difficult to isolate knowledge from different learning areas.

2.2 Assessment challenges in Curriculum 2005

One of the main challenges to C2005 had to do with assessment policy. According to Chisholm (2003), in the first year of implementation of C2005, there was no comprehensive assessment policy. Since one of the objectives was to develop learners with many and different abilities, a comprehensive assessment policy was a prerequisite. However, as Chisholm (2003) points out, if the assessment policy is not comprehensive there is a high possibility that learners may finish school without enough skills. Linked to this challenge is also the fact that a limited assessment policy may also create difficulties for learners at

tertiary level because they would have not been equipped with the skills that would enable them to function fully.

2.3 The Emergence of the National Curriculum Statement

This section briefly discusses issues that resulted in the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). In order to understand languages in the NCS, the section briefly discusses languages before and after NCS. According to the DoE (2008) concerns of the teachers led to a review of C2005 in 1999. The review of the curriculum provides the basis of the rNCS for General Education and Training for Grades R - 9, and the National Curriculum Statement for Grades 10-12, DoE (2008).

The Revised National Curriculum Statements are based on the principles of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and describe learning from the perspective of the learner, that is, what the learner should understand and be able to do after the teaching has taken place – the outcome displayed by the learner at the end of the educational experience (ISASA 2008). In ISASA (2008) it is argued that it is the knowledge and skills that the child has acquired through learning process that is important than the teaching done by the teacher. According to the above statement learners were lacking skills, so the National Curriculum Statement became the emergent plan to fight the crises. Again, one can argue that skills were already developed but were not enough or relevant for the outside world, hence there is still high unemployment rate. Arguing on the statement that skills and knowledge are more important than teaching, teachers themselves need special skills to be able to transfer knowledge to learners. If teachers lack those skills then teaching may not be as proper and learners may not be able to acquire the expected skills. Good skills acquired by learners show a teacher's good work in transferring knowledge, therefore credit should be given to teachers. In other words, good skills result from good teaching.

2.4 Languages in the Curriculum before 1994

2.4.1 Historical Background

Webb (2013) views language as a critical factor that influences education outcomes as it is a determinant of understanding. The argument proceeds further explaining that because of the absence of language skills, important skills and knowledge including memory cannot be transferred. The above statement reveals the importance of language in every aspect of life.

While it is important to understand what is happening in the area of languages during this era of the NCS, it is also interesting to know the historical background of languages before democracy in South Africa. It is clear that democracy in South Africa has changed the status of many official languages including the indigenous languages.

According to Banda (2009), most African countries recognised several languages as official languages, mentioning 11 South African languages as an example of the languages that were granted official status. Banda (2009) further argues that, even though the official status is granted to South African languages, English is still the main language of education, government and business. De Klerk (2006) is of the same opinion by arguing that although isiXhosa is one of the official languages in the Eastern Cape Province and despite huge changes in the policy, English offers the greatest financial and political reward. In addition, almost in every gathering where people from different cultures and racial groups meet, the used and preferred language is English. For governmental purposes, English is used as an official language. In cases where a person cannot speak English, for good communication and good service, the option is to translate. This is a clear indication that the status of indigenous languages including isiXhosa is still the same. Webb (2013:173) points out that before 1994, the African languages were totally marginalised as languages of high- function formal context (hffc) such as their use in parliamentary debates, promulgation of law, the courts,

government policy formulation, their use as languages of learning and teaching, government publications, the printed media and so on.

2.4.2 Languages in the National Curriculum Statement (post 1994)

Language is a tool for thought and communication. Learning to use language effectively enables learners to think and acquire knowledge, to express their identity, feelings and ideas, to interact with others and to manage the world (DoE 2008). Supporting the importance of language, Webb (2013) describes language as a critical factor that influences education outcomes, which in its absence important skills and knowledge including numeracy cannot be transferred. Language proficiency is central through learning across the curriculum as learning takes place through language (DoE 2008). Although the question of whether isiXhosa is used as a learning language across the curriculum is not included on the questionnaire, it was out of my interest to ask one of the teachers' points of view about this issue. According to teachers, isiXhosa is used in other learning areas just to make learners understand the content. Teachers claim that, even though isiXhosa is used in those learning areas, it is just a code switching not a complete use of the language. From the teachers' point of view, learners understand better when the content is explained in their language, which is isiXhosa in this instance. Using isiXhosa across the curriculum just to understand the content may not be a complete use of isiXhosa because learners can clearly understand the content but they are only required to use isiXhosa in isiXhosa class only. According to teachers, if learners are not allowed to express or to give back what they understood using isiXhosa, then they are not given a complete allowance to use their language across the curriculum.

According to DoE (2008), the DoE's *Language in Education Policy* promotes additive multilingualism. This means that learners must learn additional languages while maintaining and developing their home language(s) at a high level. Additive multilingualism makes it possible for learners to transfer skills, such as reading, writing and speaking, from the

language in which they are most proficient to their additional languages. Languages in the NCS include all eleven official languages as Home, First Additional and Second Additional Languages. All learners in Grades 10-12 must study at least two official languages with one language at home language level and the other at either first additional or home language level, one of which must be the language of learning and teaching. These two languages are included in the compulsory component of the National Curriculum Statement.

Webb (2013) argues that despite all the bodies and their activities, the African languages are still not being used meaningfully in public life like parliament, courts of law, universities, schools and printed media. The argument further goes stating that the country is still dominated by the languages of 10% of citizens and since 1994. Thus far, African languages of South Africa are still behind in contributing to developing the people of South Africa. This is perceived by Webb (2013) by arguing that African languages of South Africa have this far not seemed to have contributed to the development of the people of this country should have been expected.

It is stated in the beginning of the section that before democracy in South Africa, English and Afrikaans were the only languages that were granted the official language status. Nothing has changed. South Africa is still dominated by the languages of the 10% of citizens (white citizens), Webb (2013). Postma, M & Postma, D (2011) share the same sentiment by arguing that due to the political history of South Africa, English and Afrikaans have been well established as languages of learning, to the exclusion of African languages. According to Postma (2011) the effect has been that, for all who use the African languages at home, their home language remains a language for every communication, but not for further education. Postma (2011:45) further argues that English as a colonial language carries a dominant ontology which threatens the ontologies of the colonised, leaving them in a position of marginalisation and alienation. Arguing on the same issue, Thomson and Stakhenevich

(2010:272) state that during the apartheid years, only English and Afrikaans were accorded official status, and the material and ideological resources poured into them ensured their social, educational, and political hegemony.

During the years of apartheid, African languages were always embattled in a struggle for recognition, which has not been easy since there were languages which were already recognised as the most important languages to be used in all sectors including education. Although Afrikaans was one of those languages, its status was decreased and English remained the most respected one especially after the Soweto uprising of 1976 and its status was escalated. Supporting the above argument, Thomson and Stakhenevich (2010) points out that in 1976, Soweto uprising brought turn to the fortunes of Afrikaans, this caused Afrikaans to lose a significant amount of power it had during the national rules. The argument further stated that English has sustained and enlarged its ideological and linguistic following in South Africa. During the era of apartheid, many indigenous languages were simply ignored in official policy discourse and, by implication, denigrated and oppressed.

Still on the issue of indigenous languages being ignored, it is important to highlight the issue of teaching and learning in one's home language since it is also part of the concept of bringing change to the education system of South Africa. From the perspective of home language as language of teaching and learning, seeing the status of indigenous languages being ignored officially, that may give more doubt to the parents to let their children to be taught in their home language. This comes from the statement that most parents disagree with the idea of home language as the language of teaching and learning. Maybe this oppression of indigenous language brought the stereotype to many people that, to succeed, one has to know English very well, hence parents view indigenous languages different when it comes to teaching and learning.

Dominated African languages have become an issue for many scholars. Bamgbose (2005), also argues that the role of African languages has been eroded due to the impact of colonialism. The argument goes on stating that, not many Africans believe that their children could receive a meaningful education in African languages beyond the early years of initial education. Bamgbose (2005) argues on the African languages as language of learning, the fact that English was there and has been viewed as the best language that is the best to acquire in order to get an easy life, most parents do not want to see their children being left out by letting them learn in their African language. They do not want their children to be left outside the doors of success as the above argument seems condoning English as a good language that can be used as a language of learning. Alexander (2005) agrees by pointing out that, African language speakers do not believe that their languages could become a powerful means of communication or a part of their formal life. Bamgbose (2000) echoes the same sentiments where he claims that in South Africa, where two of the 11 official languages (English and Afrikaans), are important languages which have been dominant in education. Bamgbose (2000:13) argues that it is clear that children who speak African languages are at a disadvantage in that they have to cope with mastery of English before they can receive any meaningful education, while those who speak English and Afrikaans can go straight to learning new content without having first to learn another language. Touching the issue of dominated African languages, Postma (2011) is of the opinion that African language learners experience a problem that their home language is not fully developed before they attend school for the first time. This is indeed a problem in the sense that since they had to learn a new language (English) which is not their home language, and they have not acquired enough of their home language, it becomes easy for the new language to dominate and become the most used language. Their home language becomes less recognised. The home language is used less than the newly acquired language, English in this sense. I refer to it as the newly

acquired, since it is new to the learners and the only language they acquired was their home language.

On the other hand credit has been given to the development of African languages in South Africa since democracy. The above statement is made clear by scholars like Reagan (2007) when stating that language policy developments in South Africa have undergone dramatic change over the last decade. According to Reagan (2007), there is a move toward principles that support the equal promotion of respect for and use of other languages. Reagan (2007) argues that, many of the proposals for the new language policy have been accepted on an official level and encouraging an optimistic environment seemed, in the early years of the new government of national unity, to promise a future for languages. Thomson and Stakhenevich (2010: 272) shares the same sentiment that social change in South Africa has been driven by a matrix of new policies designed to signal a radical divorce from the apartheid era. Highlighting the change in the status of African languages in South Africa, Thomson and Stakhenevich (2010) argue that present language policies (post 1994) represent a very enabling language environment and stand in direct opposition to those experienced by South Africans during apartheid era. It is further argued that the constitution of South Africa (1996) and the language in education policy accord all languages (English, Afrikaans and) indigenous languages equal status and promoted multilingualism and mother tongue education. The above argument may cause another argument that English and Afrikaans should have not been included in the list of the languages that needed special attention since they have been highly recognised. The fact that English is used in every sector, provides it with the status of importance. This also comes from the fact that even in higher education, English is the high preference and is the language of communication, it would then not be a wise decision to try to lower its status. On the side of Afrikaans, as stated before, its status has been turned down since the Soweto uprising of 1976.

2. 4.3 Language objectives in the NCS

The NCS aims to produce learners that are competent, confident and critical readers, writers, viewers, and designers of texts. This objective according to the NCS is made possible by the use of a text- based approach (DoE 2008). This approach is also supposed to help the learners to be able to analyse texts and produce different kinds of text for a particular purpose and audiences (DoE 2008). Viewing the present generation, the idea of helping learners to analyse and produce various texts appears as the important one since today's youth seems to be getting more interest in media. The use of language to expose learners to the things that they could see and experience in their daily life seems more likely to increase their interest in languages, isiXhosa in particular. It can be very helpful to those learners that would like to see themselves in the media industry.

Cultural awareness is also given a consideration in the NCS. This is one of the interesting parts of the NCS since culture is an important aspect of life, especially in African Languages like isiXhosa. Bringing culture to our learners is a very important factor, which can unite the nation, learners in particular, especially those sharing the same cultural values. This may have a huge contribution in helping youth to know, believe and understand their cultural values, by doing so learners can also find themselves responsible to continue to respect their culture. The NCS brings cultural awareness to the curriculum for learners to learn to respect other peoples' cultural values, especially now that South Africa is identified as a rainbow nation. It is through language that cultural diversity and social relations are expressed and constructed. Learning to use language effectively enables learners to think and acquire knowledge, to express their identity, feelings and ideas, to interact with others, and to manage their world.

2.5 Challenges of the National Curriculum Statement

According to Nel & Kistner (2009) the further danger of the new curriculum is the strong focus on skills development, which could lead to a lack of focus on content. Factual

knowledge is often transmitted with very limited insight. Differentiation between content and standard between the different grades is also unclear. As far as assessment is concerned, there is too much emphasis on presentation as opposed to content. According to ISASA (2008), in the NCS to obtain the National Senior Certificate, a learner must achieve 40% for three subjects, one of which is an official language at Home level, and 30% in another three provided that a complete portfolio of evidence in the school-based assessment component is submitted in the subject failed. According to Ramphela (2009), these requirements are low and they cause the value of the NCS questionable.

2.6 The National Curriculum Statement and Assessment

According to ISASA (2008), focusing on skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values has had an impact on how the assessment is designed, meaning that the starting point in the design of the assessment is to determine what answers from a learner will illustrate their understanding of a topic. In the previous curriculum, questions to ask were those that had been covered by the teacher during teaching process and such questions encourage drill and practice rather than understanding, (Independent Schools Association of South Africa (ISASA 2008). Commenting on assessment, ISASA (2008: 3) points out that in the National Curriculum Statement examinations will move away from being largely mere a recall and there will be a much greater focus on higher order thinking and analysis, increased reading and writing required and an outcomes oriented approach, which will test a variety of skills. This supports the objective that encourages critical thinking. The tricky part with assessing critical thinking would first be to evaluate the questions that are examined in order to get a sense of whether they really target critical thinking.

2.7.0 Matric Results Before the National Curriculum Statement

This section discusses pass rates before 2008 with a particular focus on the Western Cape Province. There is not much written about Grade 12 isiXhosa results, therefore in this section

the focus will be on the literature about Grade 12 result generally. During the three years before the NCS, matric pass rate was higher than 2008, which is the first year of exams based on the NCS. Results started by being high in 2005, they became lower 2006 and dropped even further in 2007. This decrease in learners' performance also affected the number of learners with endorsements. In 2005 it was 84.4% of learners that managed to pass their matric. Out of that number, only 26.9% of learners passed with endorsements. In 2006 there was a slight drop to 83,7% with even fewer learners with endorsement to 26.6%. The year 2007 was the worst with 80,6% pass rate. In 2007, learners with endorsement dropped to 24,6%.³ These are illustrated in Figure 2.

The two graphs, Figure 1 and Figure 2 illustrate the trend in matric results before the NCS. Figure 1 shows general results with no specification on who passed with what grade. In 2005, 38 586 candidates successfully wrote exams. Out of that number, it was 32 573 candidates who passed (84%). In 2006, it was 39 824 candidates who wrote and 33 316 passed (83,7%). And Finally in 2007, 41 922 who wrote and 33 787 (80,6%) who passed as illustrated in figures 1 and 2.

³ http://wced.pgwc.gov.za/comms/press/2004/69_results.html

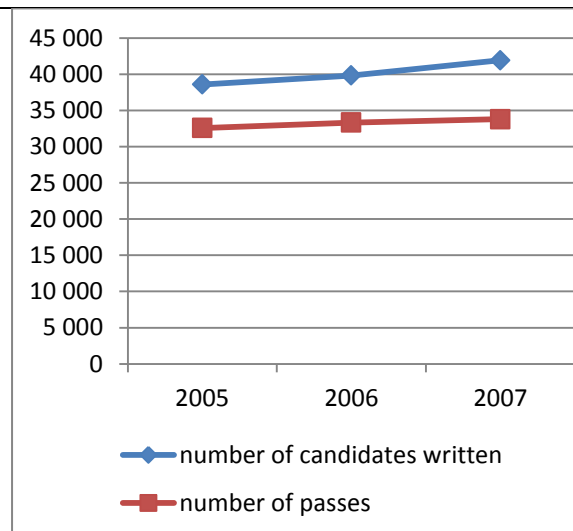


Figure 1 Matric Results Before 2008

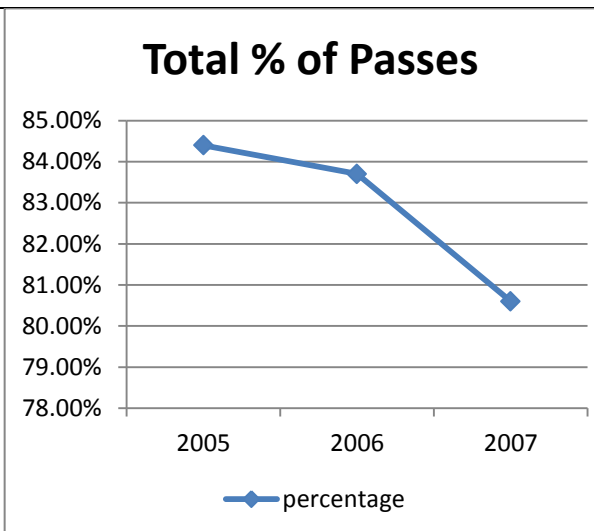


Figure 2 Total Percentage of passes

As far as passes with endorsements are concerned, whereas the difference in terms of pass rate from 2005-2007 decreased gradually, the percentage of endorsements took a sharp dive, from 27% to 24%.

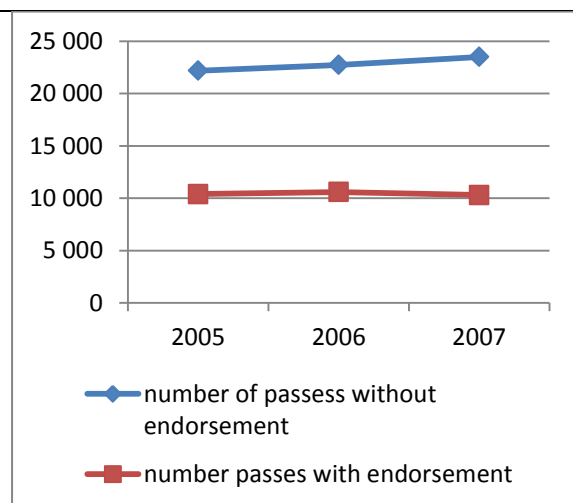


Figure 3 Endorsements

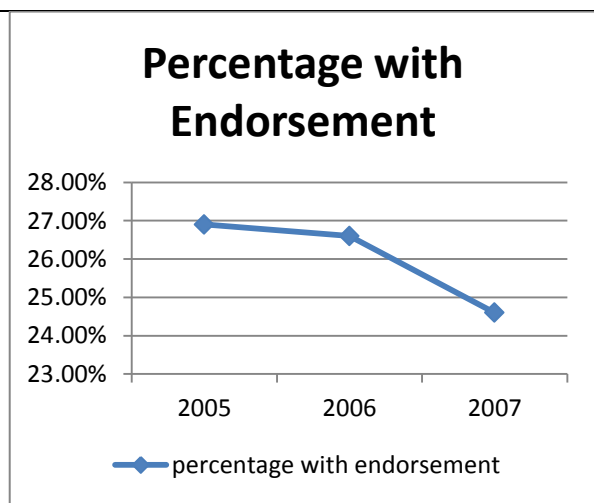


Figure 4 Percentage with endorsement

Figure 3 shows the number of passes with and without endorsement. In 2005, it was 10 394 candidates who passed matric with endorsements and 22 179 candidates passed without

endorsement. In 2006 the number increased to 10 589 and 22 727 candidates who passed without endorsement. In 2007 there was a decrease of candidates who passed with endorsement. The number went down to 10 300 and there were 23 487 candidates who passed without endorsement.

Figure 4 is a representation of candidates with and without endorsements in percentage format. In 2005, it was 26, 9% of candidates who passed with endorsement. In 2006, it was 26, 6% whereas in 2007 the number of passes increased but percentage of endorsement dropped to 24, 6%.

Figure 5 is an illustration of learners who passed with distinctions between 2005 and 2007 which is before the National Curriculum Statement. In 2005, 2 201 candidates passed with distinction. In 2006, it was 2 280 candidates who passed with distinction whereas in 2007, 2 147 candidates passed with distinction. Unlike with the pass rate, the trends in the passes with distinctions have been unstable, with the peak during 2006 and a sharp fall in 2007.

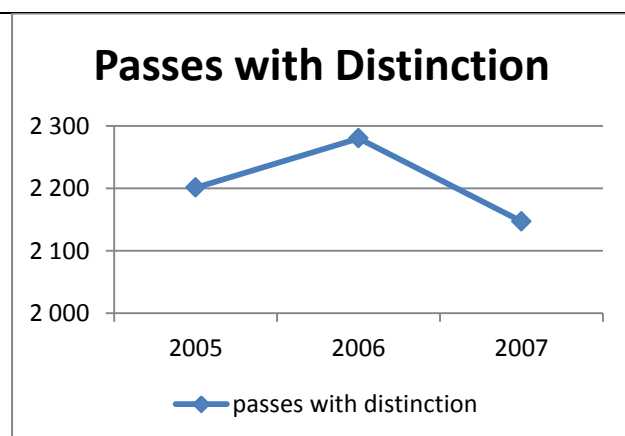


Figure 5 Passes with distinction

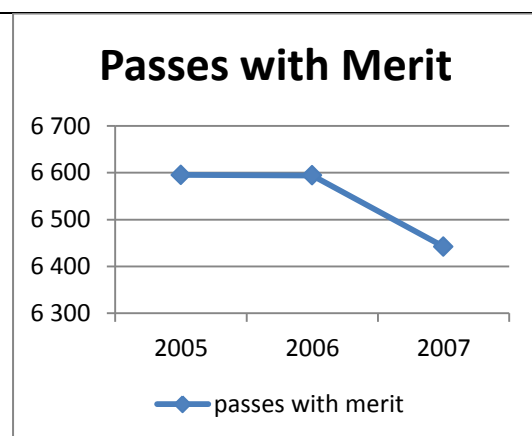


Figure 6 Passes with merit

Figure 6 illustrates the number of learners who passed with merit during 2005, 2006 and 2007. In 2005, 6 595 candidates passed with merit. In 2006, it was 6 594 candidates who passed with merit with a slight drop in 2007, where 6 442 candidates received merit.

With that being the picture over a three year period, there were more concerns regarding the instability of the pass rates as well as the various categories. In the next sections, we now turn to the NCS, for the period 2008-2011.

2.7.1 Matric Results during National Curriculum Statement

The first batch of OBE learners sat for their matric examinations in 2008. That year was a very challenging year for matric learners since they were the first to have come through the system of OBE curriculum. Not only learners were affected but teachers and even curriculum implementers were worried about the outcome of the assessments. The fact of the matter was that it was the time to assess whether the NCS is really effective for South Africa and whether it has really addressed the concerns associated with the apartheid system. From 2008 to 2010 matric results became a concern since they remained dropping since 2007, as already indicated above. In 2008, 78, 6% of learners passed matric in the Western Cape. This was a drop from 80,6 in 2007, with a 2% difference. Of this 78,6%, only 33.0% qualified to register for a university degree. These are illustrated in Figures 7 and 8.

The graphs below (Figures 7 & 8) represent matric results between 2008 and 2011. The year 2008 was the first year of the NCS examination. In 2008, it was 43 957 candidates who wrote exams. 34 556 candidates passed their exams and that shows that it was 78, 6% of candidates who passed exams. In 2009 number of candidates who wrote their exams increased to 44 931. Number of candidates who passed the exam decreased to 35 139 candidates. That shows a slightly decrease in percentage to 75, 7%. In 2010, candidates who wrote exams were 45 783. It was 35 139 candidates who passed exams. The percentage is 76, 8%. In 2011, 39 988

candidates managed to write exams. Out of that total, 33 145 candidates passed, a total of 82, 9% candidates who passed.

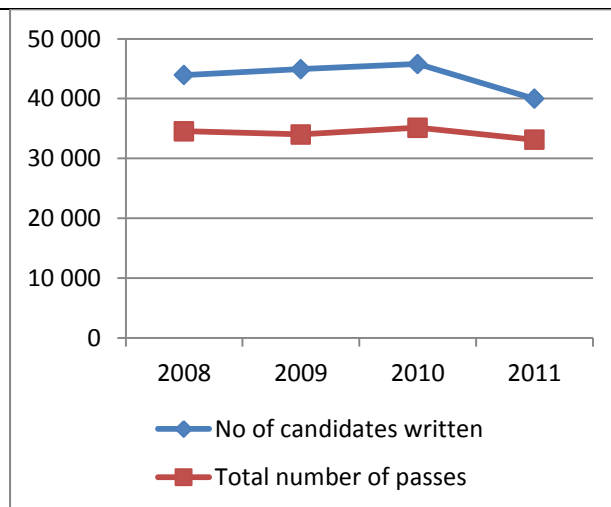


Figure 7 Passes 2008-2011

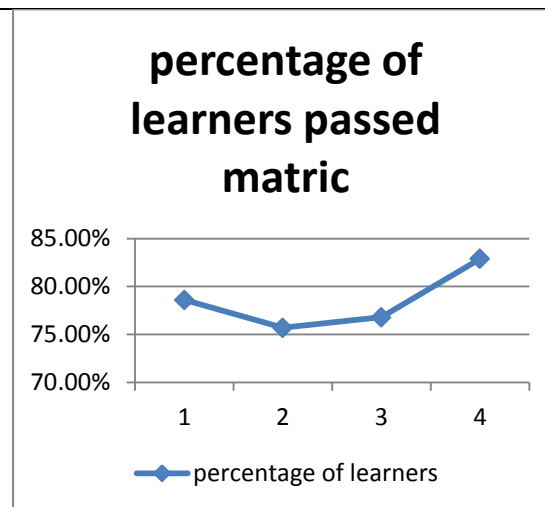
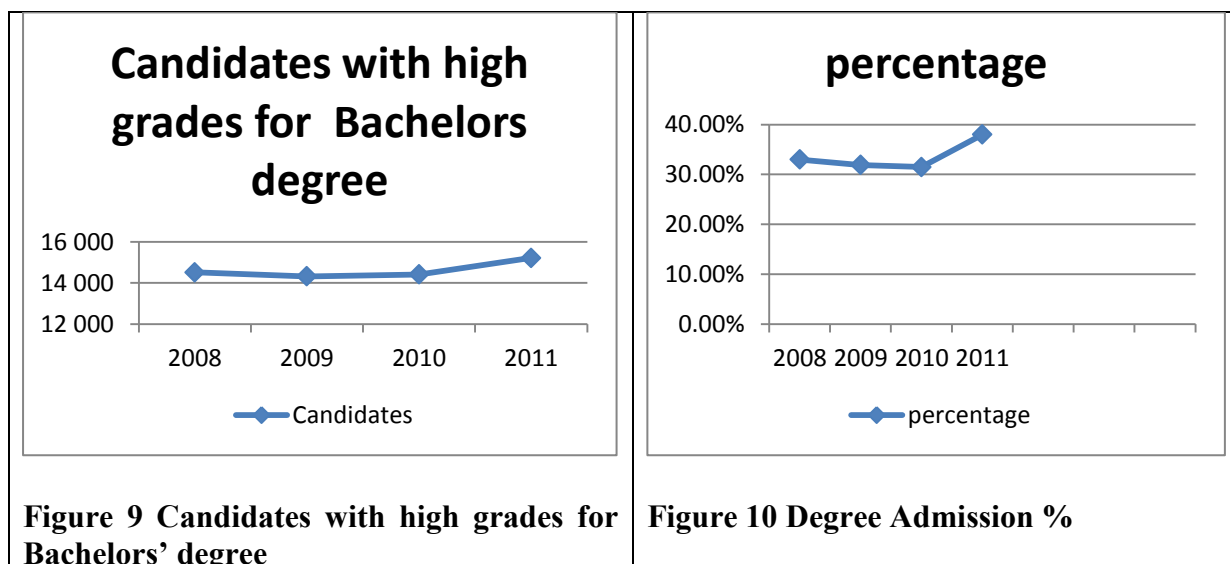


Figure 8 Matric Passes 2008-2011⁴

The last category that we considered had to do with University entrance requirements. Figures 9 and 10 represent candidate who scored high grades to be able to register a university degree should they wish to. In 2008, it was 14 512 candidates who passed well enough to qualify for university entrance. In 2009, 14 324 passed with higher grades that could allow them to register for a degree. In 2010, the number of candidates who passed well for university was 14 414. In 2011 the number was 15 215. These raw figures are represented in Figure 9.

In order to get a clearer picture of the trends, graph 10 shows the percentages of learners achieved well enough to be considered to register at University for a degree. In 2008, 33% of candidates passed well enough to register for a university bachelor's degree. In 2009, the percentage dropped to 31, 9%. In 2010 there was another drop to 31, 5%. Finally in 2011, 38% of learners qualified for degree entrance, a big increase from the previous years.

⁴ Numbers from 1 to 4 represent years from 2008 to 2011: (1=2008, 2=2009, 3=2010, 4=2012).



2.7.2 Comparing matric results before NCS and after NCS

Looking at the first 3 years before the NCS examinations and the first three years during NCS, there is an unconvincing decrease in learners’ performance. The results were higher and then they became lower and lower since the beginning of the NCS. That may be an indication of the failure to the new curriculum, the NCS. Although the results decreased but the number of learners fulfilling degree entrance requirements increased since 2008.

ISASA (2008) states that, learners only need National Senior Certificate and four learning areas passed at a minimum of 50-59%, which is level 4. Nel and Kistner (2009) argue that the average school performance for the period 2001 and 2005 had gradually increased, while the first year performance at the University had declined over the same period. That could be a possibility if one looks at requirements for a Bachelors’ degree. The system of benchmarking test that according to ISASA (2008) is used to judge each candidate’s suitability for tertiary study, may only help the candidates to get to university but after that they are on their own. After that, what happens to the candidate?

2.7.3 IsiXhosa and Matric Results

There is an indication that although there has been a change of curriculum since the anti-apartheid era, isiXhosa has made quite an improvement. There are schools that showed greatest improvement in performance in isiXhosa Home Language in 2011 as compared to their performance in 2010. The school that received an award was Fezeka Secondary School at Gugulethu which has increased number of passes. Another awarded school was Hector Peterson Secondary School in Khayelitsha. The school was given an award for producing the highest number of passes in isiXhosa Home Language. This shows that although there are challenges in the education system of South Africa, teachers and learners try very hard to maintain the teaching and learning.

2.8 Factors Affecting Pass Rate

According to Chisholm (2003), the DoE 1997 policy for the Foundation Phase states that no learner should fail but should progress to the next level with their age group. The review committee states in the 1998 National Assessment Policy rules that learners may repeat a grade only once per phase (Chisholm 2003). Using age as criteria to let learners proceed to the next grade can have negative impact on the pass rate. Learners get promoted to Grade 12 not due to their performance but because of the age. This may in turn, result in a number of learners being incapable of performing up to the expected standard. This being the case, if the department wants to stick to this kind of promotion method, it should consider using the same method up to Grade 12. One would argue that, that may also lower the standard of learners who pass matric. The general agreement was then that the DoE will need to produce programmes to help learners achieve excellent results, not just promotion.

McGregor, (2009) argues that OBE cannot be solely blamed for this high failure rate, as it was not given a fair chance by the Department. According to McGregor (2009), ANC is the one to blame for introducing the OBE before laying the ground work adequately.

Reddy on the other hand, argues that low matric pass rate is a reflection of the persistent inequalities, learners from better resourced schools were better able to adapt to the OBE programme⁵.

We may recall that one of the aims of OBE was to redress the inequalities of the past in education. As we can see from the discussion it is not only learners that one should look at, but even teachers found it difficult to adjust from the old curriculum to OBE, thereby further emphasising the differences in access to quality and equal education. Observers argue that the 2008 matric results show that despite a drastic curriculum change, education in South Africa is still plagued by problems rooted in the apartheid era⁶. McGregor (2009) shares the same insights by arguing that schools in rich, predominantly white areas are able to cope, their teachers are better rewarded and better trained and better resourced as opposed to the relatively poor and rural black schools⁷.

On the other hand Brian O'Connell argued that 2008 matric results should not be blamed on historical inequalities but seen as warning of a national education crisis⁸. This is indeed an intriguing argument since in South Africa, trying to bridge gap between the advantaged and disadvantage schools comes with an expense which the country has to deal with first.

Ramphela (2009) argues that the low pass requirements question the value of the NSC (for three subjects 40% is required and for another three 30%). Moreover, only 20% of the 2008

⁵ <http://www.polity.org.za/article/matric-results-show-system-is-failing-2008-12-30>

⁶ <http://www.polity.org.za/article/matric-results-show-system-is-failing-2008-12-30>

⁷ <http://tonymac04.hubpages.com/hub/Education--a-crisis-of-delivery-not-curriculum>

⁸ <http://tonymac04.hubpages.com/hub/Education--a-crisis-of-delivery-not-curriculum>

NSC candidates met equally low requirements for university exemption, namely 50% in four subjects. This is lower than what was required for matriculation exemption in the past (Ramphela 2009). It seems that the standard of education is getting lower regardless of the curriculum change. This means that the uneven matric results for 2008 show that despite a drastic curriculum change, South African education has a long way to go⁹. Sharing the same sentiment, McGregor (2009) argues that unequal education was the rule throughout South Africa since the late 1800s. Overcoming the legacy of these nearly 200 years will not happen overnight.¹⁰

2.9 The Road Ahead

According to McGregor (2009), what is needed is a deliberate systematic programme of educational reform not concentrated on the curriculum¹¹. McGregor (2009) highlights the point that a huge emphasis needs to be placed on teachers education in a way that no teacher should be expected to facilitate learning without adequate development of their own skills and knowledge. According to McGregor (2009), if the DoE chooses to ignore the existing issues then results will remain unpredictable. He proposes that solving the issues of pass rate, requires the eradication of the inefficiencies in the National DoE and that education should be seen as a national priority. According to McGregor (2009), priority in all budget decisions needs to be given to education, not just the bricks and mortar, but the human elements as well as teacher salaries being seen as a priority.

2.9.1 Alignment

⁹ <http://www.polity.org.za/article/matric-results-show-system-is-failing-2008-12-30>

¹⁰ <http://tonymac04.hubpages.com/hub/Education--a-crisis-of-delivery-not-curriculum>

¹¹ <http://tonymac04.hubpages.com/hub/Education--a-crisis-of-delivery-not-curriculum>

According to Webb (2002:1), alignment is an important attribute to the education system. Webb (2002) further argues that curriculum alignment requires a strong link between curriculum standards and assessment, between curriculum standards and instructional activities and materials, and between assessment and instructional activities. The question that follows directly from these statements is why should teachers be concerned about curriculum alignment since they are not responsible for the assessment. It does seem like the focus has shifted from the concern that learners learn as a result of their schooling experience, than with what they know and can do with regardless of the source of knowledge or skill (Burstein & Winters 1994).

According to Webb (2007), proper curriculum alignment enables the understanding of the differences in the effects of schooling on learner achievement. Another reason for the importance of curriculum alignment as stated by Webb (2007), is that poorly aligned curriculum results in underestimating of the effect of instruction on learning.

2.10 Summary

There are a number of critical aspects of a literature review. Amongst others, literature review enables the researcher to discover existing knowledge that is related to the topic under discussion, find gaps in this knowledge as well as avoid duplicating studies that have already been carried out. As it can be deduced from the discussion, very little work has been done that looks at alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment. In particular, there are no studies (to the best of my knowledge) that deal directly with the topic of alignment in African languages. As such, the questions that emerged as part of the challenges have been included in this study. The highlights include the level of involvement that is required from the side of the teachers as far as curriculum design and implementation are concerned. Secondly, there is a strong indication that the jargon associated with the curriculum can be a potential barrier. As it has been discussed above, studies need to be carried out that looks at

teachers understanding and engagement with the terminology. Finally and most importantly, we have seen that one of the highest curriculum objectives is to develop critical thinking and prepare students for a role in the society. Language is central to all of these, in particular, the Home Language plays a major role. It is for these reasons, and some which are discussed in the next chapter, that we embarked on this project.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The primary purpose of this chapter is to outline the research methodology used to collect and analyse data for this study. To the best of my knowledge, there are no studies that have looked at the alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment of isiXhosa Home Language. As such, we designed the research methodology in ways that would allow us to gather as much information as is possible on the subject. The research tools were designed to gain data that will provide insights into the following research questions:

1. What are the stated curriculum objectives for isiXhosa Home Language?
2. To what extent are these objectives aligned with assessment?
3. To what extent are the assessment tools reliable and valid?
4. What role do language teachers play in the development of the curriculum objectives design?
5. To what extent do teachers have a clear understanding of why curriculum objectives are necessary?

In order to gain an understanding of the motivation behind the choice of research tools, we also need to understand demographics and challenges facing those who wish to conduct research in the area of curriculum development and assessment. However, before providing a detailed research methodology, we introduce the chapter with a description of the demographics and access as these have a direct influence on the design of the research tools. We then elaborate on research procedures such as questionnaires and an examination of question papers. A description of the approaches used in data collection and analyses is also given.

3.1. Demographics

Demographics are some of the most important characteristics of a participant that a researcher should note. These include information such as gender, age, education and so on. Because of the design of this study and the limited access to a number of participants, the demographic information collected was very basic. In the next sections we elaborate on these.

3.1.1 Geographical location

The fieldwork was done at three high schools in the Western Cape region. One school is situated at Langa, which is one of the largest townships in Cape Town. The other is situated in the township of Nyanga and the third one in Mowbray, which is situated in the south of Cape Town. Two of the schools are within a 10km radius of the University of Cape Town and the other is within a 3km radius. These schools were selected on account of the fact that they are among the schools in Cape Town that offer isiXhosa Home Language. Secondly, they are easily accessible because they are situated close to the University of Cape Town where the researcher studies. These schools were chosen to represent a small sample of all schools that offer isiXhosa Home Language in the Western Cape. Thirdly, isiXhosa teachers were chosen with the consideration that they are the native isiXhosa speakers, which made it easy for the researcher to give them questionnaires. One Grade 12 class was chosen in each school, which brings the total to three classes. Learners were selected on the basis that they were native speakers of isiXhosa and were available to take part in the study. Participants for this study were therefore the learners and the subject teachers.

3.2 Ethical issues

Cresswell (2003), highlights that the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the participants. Considering the fact that sensitive information may be

revealed, therefore, to be on the safe side, we decided to request permission from the DoE by writing a letter to the Western Cape Department of Education. The procedure required the completion of a form. The form was completed and submitted but there was no response from the DoE. According to Heath and Street (2008), it is important to obtain agreements in writing with the people that are responsible for approval or rejection. No fieldwork may be carried out before obtaining such permission. In order to avoid further complications the researcher asked for permission from those responsible, including the school principals. Before sending requests to the schools, the researcher first met the principal of each school. Thereafter a letter from the supervisor was sent to the principals, which they forwarded to heads of department and the class teachers to get permission for data collection. The researcher was introduced to the heads of department and subject teachers. The researcher was also introduced to the learners by the isiXhosa subject teacher.

The timing of the fieldwork is also very crucial. A lot of pressure is exerted on Grade 12 learners and teachers to complete the syllabus before the final examination. Before administering the questionnaire, detailed instructions were explained to the learners and teachers. Both groups were also informed that the completion of the questionnaire was confidential and voluntarily, therefore they were given the option to withdraw from completing the questionnaire. The names of teachers and learners were kept confidential. After the consideration of the ethical issues, research was conducted. It is important to note that, due to the lack of response from the DoE, classroom observation as well as interviews with the subject advisors could not be carried out.

3.3 The Questionnaires

As stated in the previous chapters, the aim of the study was to investigate alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment. Teachers' and learners' perspective are trusted to answer the research questions as none of the other stake holders made themselves available. The primary purpose of distributing questionnaires was to ensure accessing as many learners as possible within a short time period. Secondly, because no study has attempted to look at how much learners know about what is expected of them in languages, we needed a tool that will give us access to different kinds of information such as what participants know about the topic, their attributes as well as opinions about the matter. Two different questionnaires were used: One for the learner and the other for the teacher.

3.3.1 Types of questions

The types of questions used in the questionnaire were motivated by the fact that not much is known about alignment studies in isiXhosa as a Home language. We take the approach that there must be an agreement between the curriculum objectives, “a teacher’s objectives, activities, and assessments so they are mutually supportive” (Tyler, 1949). As such we needed to ask questions that would allow us to gauge whether such an agreement exists.

One of the research methodologies developed to test degree of alignment was that designed by Webb (1997). Webb’s method uses five categories to understand the degree of alignment. Since we only used two aspects of Webb’s’ methodology, we shall not go into greater detail. However, it is worth noting that we used the content focus and depth of knowledge in approaching questions from the questionnaire.

3.3.1.1 Content Focus and Depth of Knowledge

In this study, content focus is used to refer the specific content (skills in curriculum statements) measured by an assessment. In order to apply this method, it was necessary to

seek learners' and teachers' knowledge about content focus. The following are examples of questions that targeted this information from the learners:

1. How do you know what to learn for an exam? (for learners)
2. Is the exam based on what you learn in class?
3. Did the exam cover what you expected?

As can be seen, these questions targeted the information on whether learners are aware and know what content should be covered in the classroom. This information is crucial when it comes to assessing alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment. Since learners' awareness is not a very reliable source, we also directed similar questions to the teachers:

4. How do students know what they need to learn?
5. How do you know what to teach the students?
6. How do you know what is relevant?

The questions to the teachers also served a secondary purpose. We decided to compare learners' knowledge/awareness of expectations to that of teachers. This we felt would provide the much needed data in terms of future educator training in terms of information dissemination.

We also wanted to find out whether learners were satisfied with the way isiXhosa is taught and assessed. These questions together with the question on whether learners find applications elsewhere for what they study in isiXhosa were those that seek to gain access

into learners' attitudes and beliefs about the study and learning of isiXhosa. Again application for such data is numerous.

For teachers we took a different approach in terms of accessing information about their beliefs and attitudes. We wanted to know whether teachers have any contribution to the decisions on what should be covered (content) and how this should be assessed. These were covered by a number of questions, which were both open-ended and close-ended questions. These questions required information about number of hours allocated to teaching, whether this time was adequate and whether the curriculum was covered during the past year. The close ended questions were selected in order to collect some quantifiable data. However, since only three teachers participated, the results are only preliminary.

The open-ended questions on the other hand seek to gain insights into challenges that teachers face and how they deal with such problems. Such questions included:

7. If there are problems (associated with guidelines) how do you deal with them?
8. How often do you attend workshops?
9. Are these workshops useful? Explain.

3.3.2 Old Examination Papers

This section will highlight the use of old question papers and it will give reasons for why old question papers were used. The section will also outline the number of question papers used. As stated in the previous chapters, the aim of the study was to investigate alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment, it is important to also note that, due to reasons beyond our control, the study will not be addressing classroom practice. It is also important to note that it has been difficult to get grade 12 scripts themselves since there is no access to them. Hence only question papers were used.

A total of three question papers were used. One was internal and two were external. There was no difference between the internal and the external question papers since they use the same kind of style. Internal question papers are asked as the method to train learners for the final external papers so that is why the format is the same. The researcher decided to use paper three question papers because it is relevant in examining the use of skills that are required from learners and the chance to understand if learners have really acquired the skills displayed in questions. Although in grammar, there are questions that address critical thinking skills but not as well as a paper three does. Almost every skill that learners are expected to have acquired is asked in the literature paper.

Old question papers were used as the data was collected before the final examinations and recent question papers were not available yet. Although the question papers used were from the previous year, they were also relevant as the curriculum is still the same. Question papers used were limited since only 2/3 such papers are available in the new curriculum. It was important to use question papers to assess the validity of assessment in relation to curriculum statements.

3.3.3 The Participants

The participants in this study were Grade 12 learners studying isiXhosa Home Language in Langa, Nyanga and Mowbray. Ninety-seven (97) learners and 3 teachers managed to complete the questionnaires. The target was native speakers because the investigation is on isiXhosa Home Language, therefore looking for anyone else who cannot speak isiXhosa would not seem to solve the research problem or answer the research question. Grade 12 learners were chosen as they had more experience in the high school system and would therefore, by implication, know more about the curriculum.

3.4 Attributes

A decision was made to collect personal information such as age so this data could be used for future comparisons with similar studies. This type of data can further assist with intervention strategies for certain participants. For example, do older teachers find it more difficult to implement curriculum changes than younger ones? Such information was central in deciding to include age as part of the questionnaire. Also, because the questionnaires were anonymous, we needed another way of categorising the responses.

3.5 Challenges

Although the questionnaires were used, we tried to find out if there were any teachers who may be interested in interviews. Teachers declined to be interviewed and preferred to complete the questionnaires. It appeared that teachers were uncomfortable thinking that perhaps whatever they may say may be taken to the department and they could find themselves in trouble. Teachers' refusal to interviews was not a problem since the aim was to use questionnaires and the response from teachers was enough to get the information needed to answer the research questions. At another school the researcher was denied time to get learners to complete the questionnaires as they would by implication have less time to finish the curriculum. Some teachers preferred the researcher to drop questionnaires for learners to complete and then collect them later. The researcher would have liked to be with the participants to answer questions that might arise during the completion of questionnaires. Late coming of learners forced the researcher to use the afternoon periods for questionnaires. Sometimes the researcher wanted to collect data in the morning hours, but teachers suggested afternoons due to the above reason. If it was in the afternoon, it had not to be the first period after break because learners came late from break and some do not return. The late coming was happening mostly in two schools. Despite all these challenges, we were able to collect enough data to address the research questions.

3.6 Research Design

In this section, a description of all the research techniques used is provided. The study involved both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. As stated previously, the study also aimed to find out whether there is any change in learners' performance since the change of the curriculum. In that case the study becomes exploratory. The data collected will confirm the results, therefore the study is confirmatory. Luckay (2010) recommend the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to benefit the study and to provide credible and trustworthy answers to the research question, for this reason the study involved quantitative approach for certain questions and qualitative method for others. These are discussed in the next chapter.

The research was also designed following research and development research design which according to Ross (2005) can be alternatively summative whereby a comparison is made between two things. An example is given whereby mathematics achievement of students exposed to a new mathematics teaching kit is compared to students exposed to the established mathematics curriculum. In my case, a comparison of achievement of learners before and after the change of curriculum is made.

3.6.1 Capturing Quantitative data

Microsoft Excel (2010) was used to capture the data. All responses from learners were captured. In order to be clear about responses, common phrases were extracted for each response. This helped to capture responses according to the relevant phrase. This also helped to capture every response. In cases where the question was not answered, the question was taken out of the data hence in some questions, the number of responses decreases. Graphs were also used to illustrate the data.

3. 7 Summary

Research methodology was designed in a way that would help in gathering as much information as possible on the subject. The research tools were designed to gain data that will provide insights into the research questions. Questions to investigate information on learners' awareness and knowledge of the content were directed at both teachers and learners for the sake of reliability. Data was collected from three schools, one situated in Nyanga township, the second in Langa township and the third is situated in Mowbray.

For ethical reasons, permission for data collection was requested from the DoE. A letter to the advisor was given to the principal of each school. In creating questionnaires, a content focused and depth of knowledge strategy was used. Old question papers were used due to their availability and relevance. Internal question papers were used as a comparison between local and external papers. Participants were Grade 12 isiXhosa native speaker learners and teachers from the above-mentioned schools. Collecting personal information like age was for future comparisons with similar studies. Challenges like late coming of learners were identified.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess whether there is alignment between national curriculum objectives and assessment. It was to investigate whether the expectations of the National Curriculum Statement are fulfilled at Grade 12 level with a particular focus on isiXhosa Home Language. Results are given in graphs. In the analysis that follows graphs are used to help give a clearer picture of the results.

The chapter is organised in such a way that each question is presented as a section. We believe this will make reporting the results much more manageable.

4.1 Demographics

Question 1: Demographics: Age

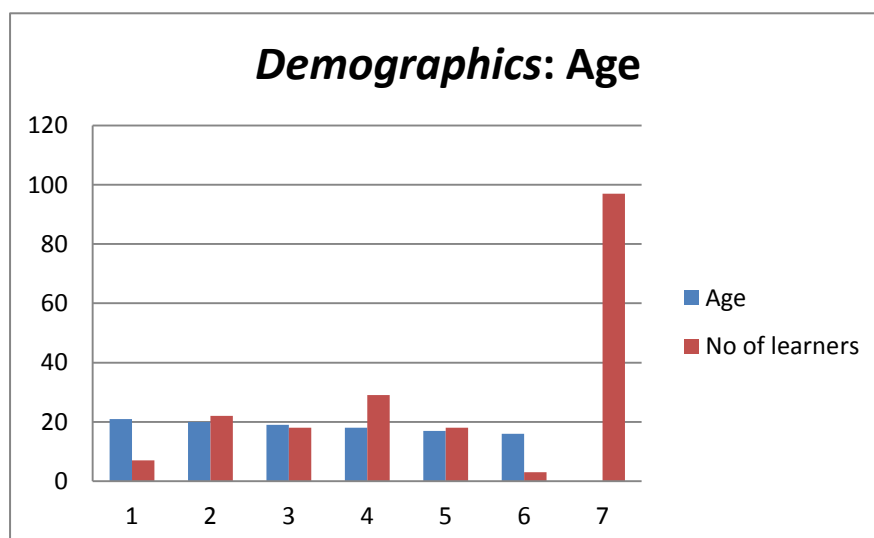


Figure 11 Demographics

The figure above gives a representation of the ages of the students who participated. One of the reasons for including this allows us to get a sense of whether a student is repeating or whether they are doing the grade for the first time. This information may be useful when

asking questions about whether learners are familiar with the expected outcomes. A student who has already taken a grade once may be more aware of these than new learners.

A total of 97 learners participated. The learners were between the ages of 16 and 21. Seven learners were 21 years old, 22 were 20 years old, 18 were 19 years old, 29 were 18 years, 18 were 17 years old and three were 16 years old. The average age was 18,6 years. As can be seen from these ages, the learners were relatively older than the normal grade 12 learners, although the average age is 18,6.

4.2 Question 2: How were your June and September results?

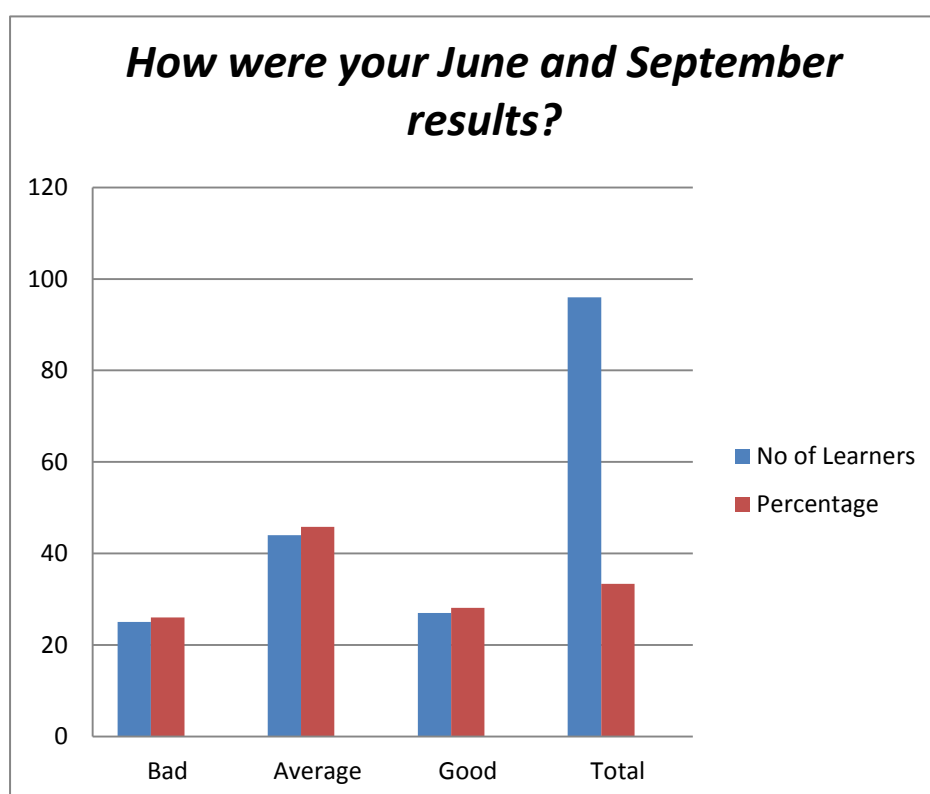


Figure 12 June and September results

The above graph aims compares two examinations by getting the results from learners. Although this is not the most reliable way of getting the learners score on the test, it reflected their perceptions about how they did in their examinations. A total of 97 learners were

questioned but one did not respond to this question. Out of 96 learners, 25 (26%) learners rated their June and September results as bad, 44 (46%) rated their June and September results as average. Out of 96 learners, only 28% of the learners rated their results as good.

4.3 Question 3: Why do you think you obtained the mark you obtained?

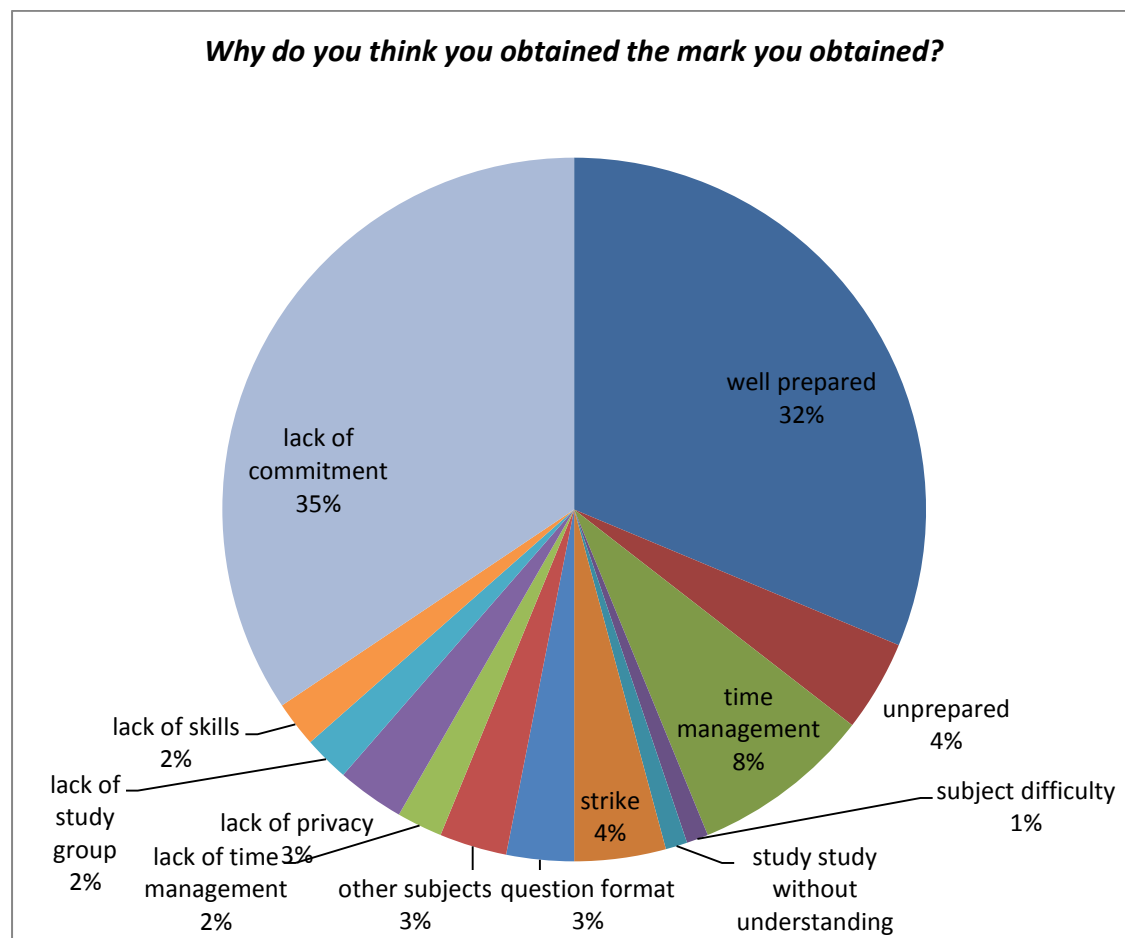


Figure 13 Reasons for certain marks

Learners may have different reasons for obtaining a particular mark, comparing their responses on the mark they obtained may help to identify the problem if there is any, be it academic or social. The researcher is hoping to find if the stated problems especially academic, has anything to do with the bad mark as opposed to the problem being alignment between the course objectives and curriculum assessment.

Again one learner did not respond to the question. Out of 96 learners, 30 (32%) learners claimed they performed well because they were well prepared. Four (4%) learners claimed that they were unprepared. A few learners (8%) indicated that they performed poor due to the lack of time management. Only one learner highlighted that their poor performance is triggered by that isiXhosa subject is difficult. Out of 96 learners, (1%) claimed that the poor performance was a result of studying without understanding. Four (4%) learners blamed the teachers' strike. Three of these learners claimed that the format of the questions was a trigger to the poor performance. Three (3%) learners mentioned that other subjects have an effect on their performance. Fewer, (2%) learners indicated that they did not have time to study whereas three (3%) of learners claimed that the lack of place to study was a problem. Two (2%) claimed that lack of study groups contributed to their performance. According to two learners the lack of studying skills was the stumbling block in their performance, while the remaining 33 (35%) claimed that they were less committed.

4.4 Question 4: Do you know what is expected of you, are you clear?

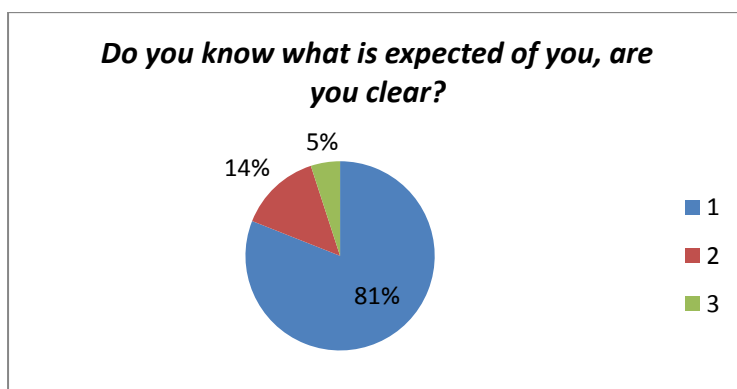


Figure 14 Expectations

The question was again answered by 96 learners of which 78(81%) claimed that they knew exactly what they were expected to do for the examinations. Thirteen (14%) felt that they did

not know what they had to do for the examinations. A few (5%) highlighted that sometimes they knew what they had to do and sometimes they did not know.

4.5 Question 5: Is the exam based on what you learned in the classroom?

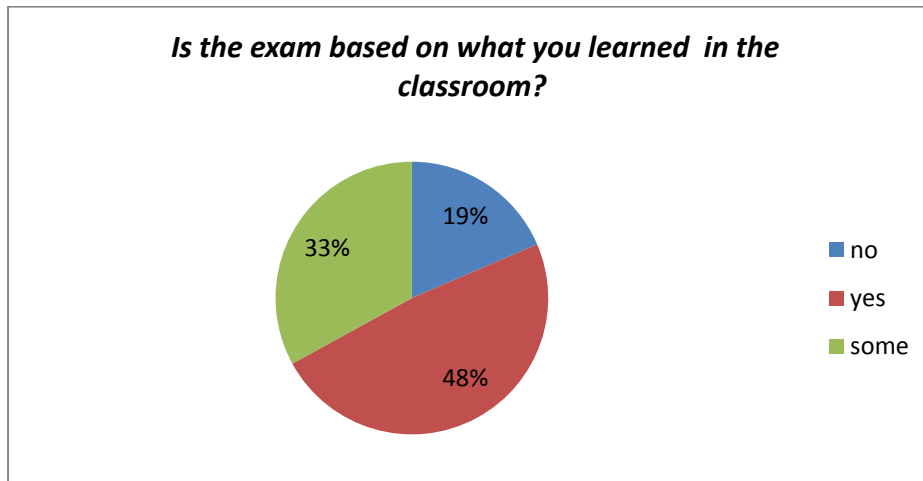


Figure 15 Examination Expectations

Ninety-seven learners responded to this question of which 18(19%) claimed that the examination is not based on what they learned in the classroom. Thirty two (33%) learners responded by saying that some questions were what they learned but there were those that came as a surprise to them. A total of 47(48%) learners claimed that the examination is based on what they have learned.

4. 6 Question 6: Did the exam cover what you expected?

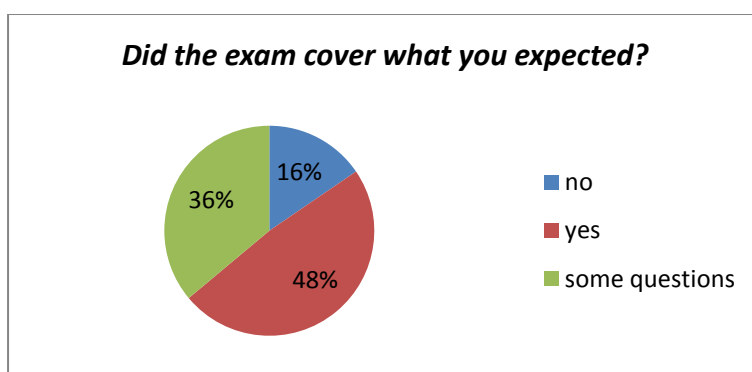


Figure 16 Examination coverage

Although this question is slightly similar to question five, we wanted to get a sense of whether the learners' expectations and what they are taught in the classroom are aligned. As illustrated by this graph (figure 16) there is a slight difference in terms of those students who felt that the examination did not meet their expectations and those who claimed that some aspects of the examination were expected.

4.7 Question 7: Are you satisfied with the way isiXhosa is taught?

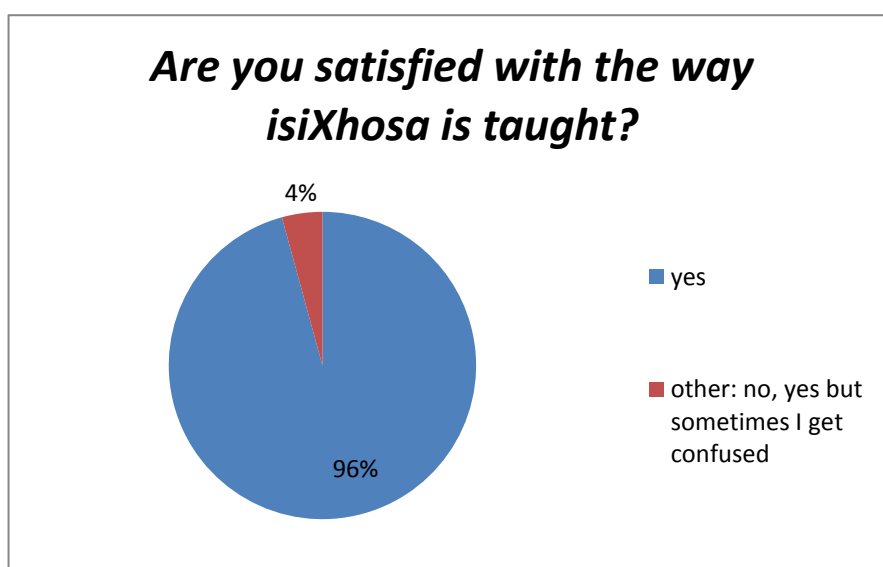


Figure 7 Satisfaction with teaching method

In this question, out of 97 learners who completed the questionnaire, three learners did not respond. Out of the 94 learners who responded, 90 (96%) indicated that they are very satisfied with the way isiXhosa is taught. "Other" in the graph represents the learners claiming that they are not satisfied with the way of teaching isiXhosa at their schools, and also represents those learners claiming that they are satisfied but they get confused along the way.

4.8 Question 8: Are you satisfied with the way isiXhosa is tested?

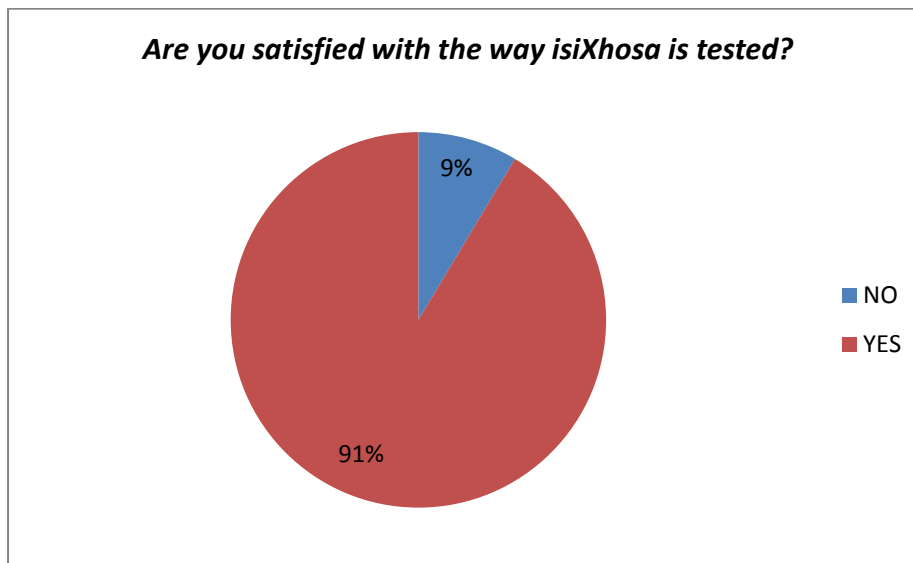


Figure 18 Test satisfaction

Four learners did not attempt to answer the question, eight (9%) claimed that they are not satisfied with the way isiXhosa was tested while 85 (91%) learners were completely satisfied with the way they were tested.

4.9 Question 9: Does the knowledge you learn from isiXhosa also help you in other learning areas?

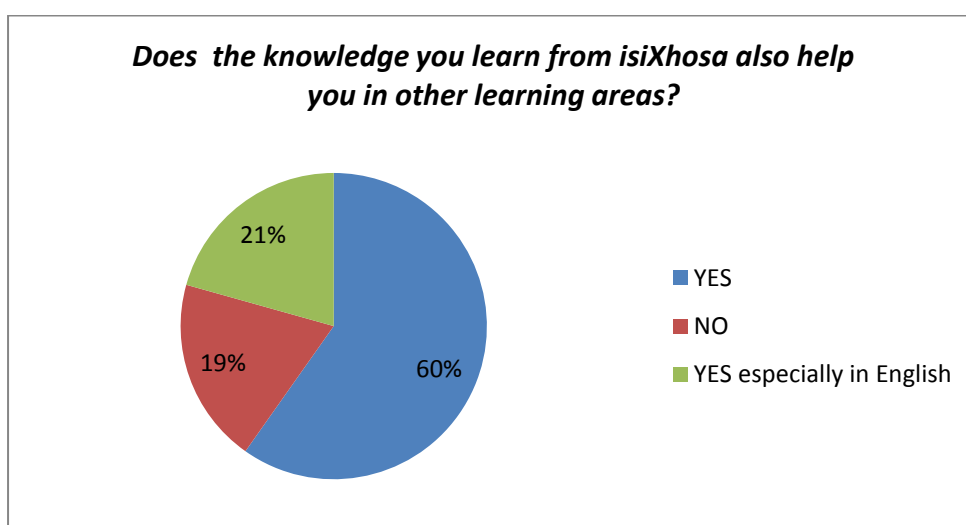


Figure 89 Knowledge Transfer

This question was answered by 92 learners. Fifty five (60%) said that the information and skills they learn in isiXhosa is very helpful in other learning areas across the curriculum. Only 18 (19%) of the learners who completed the questionnaire felt that the isiXhosa knowledge and skills have no impact in other learning areas. A further 19 (21%) learners found that the knowledge they gain from isiXhosa is very useful especially when it comes to English as a learning area.

4.10 Chapter Summary

In this chapter we presented the results of the questionnaire that was administered to the learners. We decided to separate the learners' responses from those of the educators to avoid duplication of information. Also, because of the small number of the educators involved, we opted for a qualitative approach when discussing the results. The educators responses are therefore presented as part of the discussion in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5 EDUCATOR'S RESPONSES AND DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter reports on the findings of the study based on the learners' responses. This chapter aims to give a detailed discussion of the responses for each question, for both teachers and learners. In order to provide necessary connections between these questions and the overall aims of the study, a short summary of the objectives of the study including its primary aim are provided. The chapter will take a qualitative format in which the learners' and teachers' responses as well as the Grade 12 results between 2005 and 2011 are discussed.

5.1 Objectives of the study

As stated in chapter one, the primary aim of this study is:

- To investigate whether there is an alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment.
- In order to answer this question, it is necessary to break it into smaller questions so that it may be approached from different angles. As such the following aims are also considered:
 - To assess whether the expectations of the National Curriculum Statement are fulfilled at Grade 12 level with a particular focus on the isiXhosa home language.
 - To assess whether the assessment tools test the intended outcomes and whether they are implemented in a systematic way.
 - To investigate whether the test tools produce consistent results over a number of years since the inception of outcomes based education Grade 12 external examinations.

5.2. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Objectives

In order to investigate whether there is an alignment between the curriculum, the NCS and the objectives as set out in the isiXhosa school curriculum, a brief summary of some of the relevant objectives is provided. These objectives are discussed under the questions to which they are related.

5.2.1 What are the stated curriculum objectives for isiXhosa Home Language?

It is important to start by pointing out that there are notable similarities between the different languages of South Africa (including Afrikaans and English) in the statement of objectives. For this reason, the same question could be applied to other languages as well. The NCS sets the same objectives for all Home Languages in South Africa, therefore, the response that will be given for this question will be according to other Home languages including isiXhosa as one of home languages and as the main focus of the research. The NCS (2008) indicates that

the DoE aims to produce learners who are confident and critical writers, and furthermore the DoE views cultural awareness as one of the main objectives of languages.

According to the NCS (2008), the language curriculum also aims to develop learners who can, through language, express their identity, express their feelings and ideas as well as improving their ability to manage their world.

5.2.2 To what extent are these objectives aligned with assessment?

In order to answer this question, question papers from the 2008 November examination from the DoE and 2010 June examination paper internal Langa High School were used. This was done to illustrate the level of thinking, reasoning and planning expected by the DoE for the learners to express the objectives mentioned above including identity development and ability to express feelings and ideas amongst others. The following are the examples of questions that attend to the following objectives.

Question 1

‘Ngoko Mgaqo-Siseko kuthiwa uMzantsi Afrika lilizwe leDemokhrasi. Ngokubona nokwazi kwakho ingaba kuyinyaniso kangakanani oku. Bhala isincoko ngalo mba. Bonisa nangemizekelo yezinto ozibonileyo nozibonayo ngoku sithethayo’.

According to the constitution, South Africa is said to be a democratic country. In your opinion, how true is this. Write an essay on this issue, in your discussion draw upon your past and present experiences.

(2010 June Examinations question paper, Langa High school).

There are a number of issues touched upon in such a question. The first is that there is an assumption that the learners “know” what democracy is. In this instance, there is an

expectation that they will make connections with the other learning areas in discussing the topic. This is a display of applying knowledge across learning areas.

The second issue has to do with the fact that learners can “create” or express identity. The above question promotes the use of evidence as a good way to approach a question. Learners are required to draw from their current experiences to be able to express this identity in a democratic country. This is in line with Webb (2002) where there is emphasis on depth-of-knowledge consistency as a criteria for judging alignment standards, the criteria requires reasoning, planning, using evidence, and a higher level of thinking.

Question 2

‘EsiXhoseni ayiqhelekanga into yokuba umntu ahlale, abukele kusetyenzwa ngabanye kungoko kukho le ntetho ithi, ‘Esihleliyo sidla ukuhlala, esiphilayo sesithwethwayo.’ Le ntetho ingqinwa nanguRhulumente weDemokhrasi kuba wova amaxesha amaninzi elikhuthaza iphulo likaVuk’uzenzele. Chankcatha kule ntetho ubonise ubunyani bayo ngokuthi uchaze indlela anokuthi umntu kule mihla aphile ngayo’.

In the Xhosa culture it is not common for a person to sit and watch while the others are busy working, hence there is a saying that “You snooze you lose”, this is also supported by the Democratic Government by encouraging the “do it yourself” campaign. Discuss the above statement and show the ways that one can make living these days.

(November 2008 isiXhosa home language question paper, Grade 12).

In this question, culture is used as a tool to promote learners’ individual identity as well as independence. The above question is aimed at assessing the level of cultural awareness of the learners. It is also a way of assessing their knowledge of norms and how these are woven and expressed through language. By including sayings such as “*Esihleliyo sidla ukuhlala,*

esiphilayo sesithwethwayo” and “ *Vuk’uzenzele*” the learners’ linguistic skills (idioms) as well as cultural competence are tested .

Question 3

‘Ungumfundi onomnqweno wokubona uMzantsi Afrika uyiqhube ngempumelelo imidlalo yendebe yeHlabathi yebhola ekhatywayo ngomnyaka wama-2010. Unomnqweno wokuba ufuna ukuyibona ikumgangatho wehlabathi le tumente nangona uMzantsi Afrika ulilizwe elisakhulayo ngakumbi kwibhola ekhatywayo. NjengoSihlalo ojongene nolu ququzelelo lwale tumente, khawusithathe usenze siwubone lo mdlalo uyimpumelelo ngenxa yegalelo lakho nangezinto ezintsha onokuthi uze nazo ukuze siwubone uMzantsi Afrika usiza nayo ekhaya le ndebe. Bhala esi sincoko phantsi kwesi sihloko, 'Xa ndinokuba nguSihlalo webhunga eliququzelela iNdebe yeHlabathi eMzantsi Afrika.'

Your wish is to see South Africa hosting the soccer World Cup in 2010 successfully. Your wish is to see this event a success although South Africa is still a developing country especially in soccer. As the chairperson, give us a picture of the event as a success due to your input and tell us about your new ideas that would give hope that South Africa will win.

(November 2008 isiXhosa home language question paper, Grade 12.)

Amongst other things, the NCS (2008), encourages the promotion of learners as the future leaders. The question above gives a picture of learners who could see themselves as leaders one day. This question requires the learners to draw on their knowledge of facts, about soccer and hosting a world cup, and opinions, by asking them to draft their ideas that can help shape the future of South Africa. Such a question also delves into the area of expressing emotions and feelings.

Question 4

‘Nilulutsha lwengingqi ohlala kuyo, nigqibe ekubeni nenze isihika-hika sekonsathi ngeenjongo zokunyusa ingxowa-mali yabahlali. Kule konsathi nimeme iimvumi ezintathu ubuncinane ezaziwayo. Yila iPowusta enomtsalane uzivelele zonke iinkcukacha malunga nale konsathi’

The youth in your community has decided to host a concert to fundraise for the community. In this concert, you have invited at least three popular singers. Create a poster showing all the details about the concert.

(DoE November 2008 isiXhosa home language question paper, Grade 12.)

The NCS emphasises the use of Text-based approach, whose purposes is to enable learners to become competent members of the society. This involves reading, viewing and analysing text to understand how they are produced and how they impact on their audience (NCS 2008). This question is an example of a text-based approach. It is aimed at involving learners in the activities that are taking place in their country. The question assesses the ability to create and analyse. Integrating different learning areas is also stated as one of the objectives in the National Curriculum Statement. Drawing a poster is a skill that can be acquired from Technology learning area, then the learners are asked to use that skill in a language lesson.

5.2.3 Are the assessment tools reliable?

Shumway et al (2003) highlights the importance of assessment tools for any kind of assessment. Five tools are mentioned: written assessments, practical assessments, observations, portfolios and other records of performance, peer and self-assessment. The most relevant assessment I am considering is the written assessment which Shumway et al (2003) identifies as the most common and popular tool of assessment. The relevance of the written assessment in this research is the fact that the investigation is on Grade 12

examination, which is the written examination and the only accessible area at the time of data collection.

According to teachers and learners, diaries, time tables, previous question papers and examination practice books are provided to help learners to prepare for their examinations. The majority of learners see the use of previous question papers as the most reliable exam preparation tool. The preference goes for both the well performing and bad performing learners.

Taylor (2009) argues that the problem of dismal literacy performance by South African children does not lie with children it lies in the teaching methods adopted by teachers. This may imply that poor performance is triggered by what teachers teach and how they transfer knowledge to learners.

According to DoE (2008) rubric is one of the tools that are useful to assess learners. A rubric is described as a tool for assessing learner performance that: describes a continuum of performance quality that ranges from poor to excellent; consists of a set of criteria that defines a task in its entirety and by which a task (assignment, project, essay, oral presentation, research task, portfolio) will be evaluated, considering both the process and the Learning Outcomes, DoE (2008). As already mentioned, this kind of a tool is very reliable and fair; it helps teachers follow a common way of assessing and rating learners without too much struggle.

5.2.4 What role do language teachers play in the development of curriculum objectives design?

Since it is teachers who are expected to transfer knowledge to learners, it is important that teachers play a part in developing curriculum objectives, hence this question is particularly important. In order to contribute towards the development of curriculum objectives design,

teachers need to attend workshops quarterly to discuss what is expected of them in the classroom and during assessment preparations. They are also expected to develop lesson plans for every lesson they are teaching. Each lesson plan is designed to achieve objectives of the curriculum. According to DoE (2008), all teachers who teach a particular language must develop the subject framework together. They have to draw up a work schedule which outlines the teaching and learning that will happen in a Grade over the course of the year. It is also stated that teachers have to show details of how each lesson plan or activity will be developed and how each item of content will be included during the year to achieve the intended learning outcomes in the NCS grades 10-12(General), (NCS Statement Grade10-12, 2008). This particular question was positively answered because teachers indicated that they attend workshops, they discuss subject frameworks as well as doing lesson plans. This can be taken as evidence of total involvement in the design of curriculum objectives. Furthermore, DoE (2008) states that teachers' unions also contribute towards assessment by formulating the Subject Assessment Guidelines. It is not clear however, how the subject assessment guidelines can target language specific issues since the curriculum objectives for the Home Languages are treated as the same. This concern leads directly to the next question.

5.2.5 Do teachers have a clear understanding of why course objectives are necessary?

If we recall, one of the challenges of the language or terminology is that it makes the documents inaccessible. This concern was particularly evident in the teacher's responses. One of the teachers highlighted that the DoE emphasises objectives, some of which are not practiced in the classroom because teachers do not understand them. This lack of understanding was not a surprise since one of the teachers claimed that even subject advisors find it difficult to explain the guidelines and that lack of explanation results in some teachers being left with no clear understanding of these objectives. In the next few sections we will try and see how all these concerns come together.

5.3 Discussion: Responses to the Questionnaire

5.3.1 Demographics

It is stated in the previous chapter that learners interviewed were between the ages of 16 and 21 years. The relevance of asking about learner's age is to get an idea whether learner's performance could be age related, specifically whether they may have repeated a grade or not. Results showed that the majority of learners that performed well in the examinations are between the ages of 16 and 18. In this instance one may only speculate that younger learners perform better, however, given the differences in age, it may also mean that these older learners have been struggling throughout, but because they are allowed to be "pushed through" based on their ages, they end up in Grade 12 with nowhere to be pushed to. However, for this particular study, reasons given for poor performance were the same for all the learners; regardless of what age group the learners belong to.

5.3.2 How were your June and September results (good, bad, average)?

The trend in many schools is that the September examination gives a sense of how well or badly learners will perform in the final examination. One of the reasons for this is because the ground that the September question paper covers is similar to that of the final examination. In many schools, by the time learners sit for the September examination, the syllabus is already covered. However, as stated in chapter four, a total of 25 learners, representing 26% of learners, indicated that they received bad results. Forty six percent reported average results and only 28% that performed well. As we can deduce from these responses, close to half of the students reported average results for June and September, a clear indication that the learners were not prepared for the final examination.

5.3.3 Why do you think you obtained the mark you obtained?

This question is a follow-up question to the question in 5.3.2 above. The majority of the learners blame themselves for being less committed. A number of reasons were however also

provided as a reason for the bad results. Learners also mentioned lack of responsibility is as a trigger for failure. Learners claim that they did not submit portfolio work, which also counts towards the end of the year results. Learners might have not been told enough how important it was to submit portfolios. However, since we did not follow up on these reasons, we will assume that learners were aware of the weight carried by portfolios.

Poor living conditions and poverty seem to be a stumbling block in education in South Africa. Some learners claimed that they did not have enough space to study at home. Some claimed they first had to sell electricity before they could do school work. Late coming due to public transport is also mentioned as one of the contributing factors for poor performance. Some learners blame the lack of private and quiet places to study. Some learners feel that their time was taken up by work-related activities such as selling electricity instead of studying. As these responses show, learners face more challenges than only those presented by the curriculum. This may be an indication that poverty and living conditions have a huge impact on learners' poor performance. Some learners claimed they performed badly because they could not manage their time well. Perhaps the DoE may consider adopting time management skills as one of the objectives. Although there was no specific question about time management, learners' responses gave an idea that teaching learners how to manage time effectively may be one of the important skills that learners need to acquire not only to prepare for exams but also for future purposes.

Learners also indicated that teachers and the DoE seem to have contributed to their performance. Some learners claimed that they performed poorly due to the striking of teachers. Teachers were striking for their rights, but learners should have been considered as well by being given make up classes to cover what was left unfinished in the curriculum. Although it is said that make up classes were given, the learners' results do not reflect this. Four per cent of learners that claimed that strikes were the reason for their performance. It

might seem like a small number of learners but this could have a large impact on the pass rate of the province and that of the country. Some learners responded by saying that the format of the questions was not clear to them. One would ask if learners do not understand the format, how they are assessed during their tests throughout the year and if the test format is different from the examination format. Some learners claimed that there is not enough time between the examination dates of the learning areas such that they do not get enough time to prepare. This may be a challenge to the DoE. One of the reasons is that isiXhosa as a subject contains a lot of work and learners could not cope well. Some learners claimed that the questions were so confusing that they did not understand them. Some learners blamed the lack of required skills that could help them to perform well in the examinations. They claimed that they could not pass their examinations due to their lack of reading skills. This kind of response may be an indication that the time allocated to reading may not be enough or something else substitutes reading. It may also happen that learners miss reading period due to the late coming as mentioned in the responses that some learners arrive late because they depend on public transport. On the other hand it may happen that learners' lack reading skills because they were thinking about their personal lives while they were supposed to be concentrating since some of them have serious issues relating to their living conditions, like selling electricity after school and a lack of privacy.

5.3.4 How do you know what to learn for Examinations?

The question investigates whether learners are told exactly what to prepare for examinations.

It may happen that the way learners receive information to prepare for examinations is the cause of their poor performance for those who performed poorly or good for those who performed well, therefore, this question may help to expose the reason behind any kind of learner performance. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some learners claimed that they

just read everything taught from the classroom because they were not told what to prepare. Others said their teachers told them what to prepare for examinations. The majority of learners have mentioned the use of previous question papers as the tool that helped them to prepare for examinations. This tool has been mentioned often especially by the learners with good results. This may indicate that examination papers are the most reliable tool to achieve good results. Practice books and the help of subject advisors are also identified as sources of information to prepare for examinations.

A few learners claimed that they did not get anything from teachers or subject advisors; they just worked according to what has been done during classroom practice. It is a minority of those learners who claimed to prepare according to what has been taught in class, who did well. This may be an indication of a lack of communication among the three parties (the DoE, teachers and learners). On the other hand, one could argue that learners have to make use of other sources that were supplied to them as well, not only classroom work, especially if one considers the fact that the learners who performed well were those who used both teachers' advice and previous question papers.

In most cases teachers are not transparent enough, according to learners. They claim that there was no specification on what to prepare for the examination whereas one of the teachers' response on the question indicated that learners were given diaries and it was their responsibility to make sure that their dairies were checked frequently. Response from both parties seems contradicting.

5.3.5 Do you know what is expected of you?/ Are you clear?

Responses to this question reveal that the majority of learners claimed they knew exactly what they had to do to prepare for the examinations. This number is a combination of learners who performed badly and those who performed well. For that reason, teachers may be given credit. This question, taken together with the above question, shows that poor performance

has nothing to do with a lack of clarity on what learners were expected to do. Very few learners claimed that sometimes they knew and sometimes they did not know what they were expected to do. Some of learners did not respond to this question. Because of the limitations mentioned in chapter three that I was denied time to explain the questionnaires to the learners, the empty responses could not be noticed in time.

5.3.6 Is examination based on what you learn in class?

As Shumway and Harden (2003) highlight, assessment should ask for what is expected of learners to have been acquired, therefore it is important to hear from the learners' point of view whether they were questioned on what they had learned in the classroom. In chapter two Martone and Sireci (2009) agreed that what a learner is tested on should be derived from what is expected of the learner as detailed in the state or district standards, as well as from what is taught to the learner by his or her teachers. It is already illustrated in the previous chapter that 48% of learners responded that examination questions are asked based on what they learn in class. This is the majority of the respondents and that could mean that the DoE is at least trying to meet learners' academic requirements. The results also indicate that the majority of well performing learners are in this category. It could be possible that those learners claiming to have been examined on new work were not attending or were not listening attentively in the classroom. Although credit may be given to both teachers and curriculum implementers, a huge job still needs to be done to make all learners understand that attendance is crucial and important as, according to other learners, the classroom is where all the important decisions about teaching and learning are taken.

5.3.7 Did the examinations cover what you expected?

The previous chapter reported that 48% of learners claimed to be examined on what was expected, whereas 15% claim to be examined on new work. Although 48% appears to be a large portion of the learners who responded, one needs to take into account that a further 36%

claimed that some of the questions were based on work covered in the classroom. . This could indicate that perhaps a lot still needs to be done to make sure that every learner is familiar with what they will be examined on. By doing so, alignment between curriculum objectives, assessment and classroom practice may become as strong as expected. On the other hand, a group of learners who responded that what was in the examinations was expected could indicate that teachers and examination committees are doing a very good job to make examinations as transparent as possible.

5.3.8 Are you satisfied with the way isiXhosa is taught?

Three learners decided not to answer this question. Although identity was confidential, the reason for not attempting the question may be the fear of being identified as bad learners by their isiXhosa subject teachers. Looking at the responses of learners, 1% of learners claimed that isiXhosa is a difficult subject such that they were not planning to study it after high school. On the other hand, a majority of learners indicated that they were very satisfied with the way isiXhosa was taught. This includes both well performing and poor performing learners. This can be an indication that teachers are doing well in transferring knowledge to the learners. Even those who performed badly did so not because of the way they were taught but because of other reasons like poor living conditions.

5.3.9 Are you satisfied with the way isiXhosa is tested?

Satisfying every learner may not be a success, asking this kind of a question was to get an idea from both groups of learners, that is those who may be satisfied with the way isiXhosa is tested and those who may not be satisfied. Somehow we discovered that some of the questions that were not answered, could have been mistaken as being repetitive, whereas the idea was to tackle the issues from different directions.

As stated in the previous chapter, out of 97 learners, four learners decided not to answer the question, meaning that 93 learners responded to the question. Nine percent of

learners claimed that they were not satisfied with the way isiXhosa was tested whereas 85% claimed they were very satisfied. All the learners who claimed to be unsatisfied are those who reported performing poorly in the examinations. The satisfied group comes from both well performing and poor performing learners although the majority is the well performing group of learners. This might be indicative of good work that teachers and examination boards are doing to make learners feel like they are a part of the examinations. By “being the part of the examinations” it is meant that if they are satisfied about the examinations then it means they are being tested on what was taught and therefore they will be able to demonstrate what they have been learning.

5.3.10 Do things you learn in isiXhosa help you with other learning areas?

Integration among the learning areas is one of the aims of the NCS. It became more interesting to investigate whether this integration is of any help to learners. The question was specifically to investigate whether the knowledge learners gained in isiXhosa, in particular, could help them in other learning areas. Sixty percent of learners responded by saying they found the knowledge learned in isiXhosa very helpful in other learning areas as well. Some became even more specific by mentioning English and Life Orientation as learning areas where they can use isiXhosa knowledge. Twenty-one percent responded “yes” to the question, furthermore, they mentioned English as the learning area where they found isiXhosa knowledge useful. This may support the idea of the DoE that one of the aims of the NCS is to develop multi-skilled learners. In other words, learners can also be able to understand what is happening in other learning areas that they are not necessarily attending classes in. Alignment is not shown in the specific learning area only but in all the learning areas. It appears that integrating learning areas is one of the most effective ideas curriculum implementers have ever come up with. Nineteen percent of learners said that what they do in isiXhosa only helps them in isiXhosa and has nothing to with other learning areas. It is

indeed also evident in the kind of questions (from question papers) that require knowledge from other learning areas, to be applied to language studies.

5.4. Discussion: Teachers' responses.

Since the study investigates alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment, the following questions are a combination of both components of the study. For teachers to know whether their learners' performance improves or not, they need to evaluate their learners' in a given assessment. Some questions have to do with preparations of assessment which are believed to include following what is expected of teachers and how to teach. Understanding everything about curriculum objectives and assessment may help them. The data were collected from three teachers coming from three different schools. The names of teachers will not be revealed for ethical reasons. All teachers were native isiXhosa speakers.

5.4.1 Are you satisfied with the performance of your learners?

One of the teachers seems unsatisfied by the learners' performance. It seemed learners were to blame for their poor performance. Lack of dedication from learners is one of the issues that teachers raised. Two teachers have different views on the point of learners' performance. They were satisfied with their learners' performance.

5.4.2. How do learners know what they need to learn?

The interest here was also to know whether teachers are transparent enough with learners about what and how to prepare for assessments. One teacher highlighted that resources like diaries were issued to the learners so they would know what to prepare. One teacher also emphasised that it was learners' responsibility to make their own study plan. The other teacher said that learners were given all the information from the guidelines and framework. It was not clear however, whether learners knew what to do with the diaries or whether the guidelines and frameworks were discussed at all with the learners.

5.4.3 How do you know what to teach your learners?

One teacher responded by saying that they get all the information from the guidelines from the DoE. Two teachers shared the same sentiments further explaining that they are led by the lesson plan that they do every week. Although these lesson plans were mentioned, it was not clear whether the lesson plans were guided by the guidelines or not, given the challenge of terminology, this issue is a cause for concern.

5.4.4 How do you know what is relevant?

Anderson (2002) mentions the importance of relevance of the content, therefore it was in my interest of knowing whether it is teachers' decision to choose what is relevant to teach or whether the DoE tells them. The results show the common response that the relevance of the content comes from the guidelines issued by the subject advisors and is explained clearly for everyone to understand. Although all teachers mentioned the guideline, the interesting part in the responses was that one of them argued that everything that was in the guideline was relevant, one cannot spot what to teach and not to teach. The other interest in this question was to know whether there was a specific way that teachers were expected to impart the knowledge. All teachers responded that there was a guideline specifying certain methods that teachers should follow in order to make sure that learners gain good quality knowledge.

5.4.5 Who decides what should be taught?

Involving teachers on whatever decisions may be taken on what exactly should be taught could make teachers' jobs easier as they are the main tool in imparting the knowledge to learners. One teacher did not respond to the question. Another teacher responded by saying that subject advisors make decisions on what should be taught whereas the other teacher said that Grade 12 teachers meet to decide on the relevant curriculum. Two teachers teaching the same Grade had two different responses on the same question. We can again see a grey area in this instance, where one teacher abstained, the other two giving opposing responses. This

could suggest that each school has a different way of deciding how to go about teaching and what should be taught. In this question we were hoping to hear that teachers engage with the curriculum as well as subject advisors. However, since the number of the respondents is really small, we cannot make any deductions in this regard.

5.4.6 Who decides what to assess?

It was rather useful getting teachers' point of view of whether they are included in the decisions on what to assess. It is a general expectation that teachers' involvement in assessment decisions may help them to plan their teaching better. This may also help teachers to have an idea of whether there is any kind of alignment between what they teach and assessment. Two teachers shared the same views that all teachers teaching the same Grade meet and discuss what to assess. The other teacher said that they get the guide from the DoE. Again we see the responses for the questions being different, in an instance where a unified answer was expected. The responses raised another question, that of who gets guidelines from whom and who does not get them and why?

5.4.7 Are there some guidelines on how you are expected to deliver the content?

Knowing what is expected may not be enough, a guide may lead to success, and hence this question was directed at getting an understanding of how teachers decide to teach, once they know what to teach. For teachers, to be guided on how to deliver knowledge to learners may make things easy for them, and that may also increase learners' performance. All teachers answered "yes" to the question with more explanation from one of them that although there are guidelines but teachers are still not clear about those guidelines.

5.4.8 Are there any problems associated with the guidelines?

According to Chisholm (2003), teachers are not clear about the OBE curriculum, they experience difficulties understanding the curriculum and its objectives. One teacher's point of

view was that the majority of teachers were not clear about the guidelines. The teacher further explained that for too many teachers guidelines were vague such that even the subject advisors seemed confused and also found it difficult to explain the guidelines to teachers. The teacher said that dealing with guideline problems, teachers meet to help those who struggle to understand it. This lack of clarity about the guidelines may be seen as a reason for poor performance. It may also lead to the low level of alignment between teaching and curriculum objectives. If teachers are not clear about guidelines, they may choose their own way of delivering the knowledge and that may cause learners' performance to be different at different schools. As one of the teachers mentioned, some teachers are not clear about the guidelines, this difference in performance may be caused by teachers' different levels of understanding of the guidelines. It may be assumed that a learner's performance differs according to a teacher's understanding of the guidelines.

5.4.9 If there are problems how do you deal with them?

It is also interesting to find out whether teachers have their own ways of dealing with the problems should there be any. Two teachers responded to the question. One teacher said that, should they experience problems with guidelines, they discuss the problems with other teachers who teach the same grade. The other teacher said they discuss the problem with teachers who seem to understand the curriculum well.

5.4.10 How often do you attend workshops?

Those teachers who do not attend often have difficulties understanding the guidelines since one of the teachers highlighted that the curriculum, including guidelines are discussed during the workshops. Therefore, this question is asked to get an idea of the amount of workshops offered and whether teachers attend these workshops. Responses to the question were general not individual so there was no clear understanding on how often teachers attend workshops. The response given was that teachers attend workshops quarterly and during moderation. It

is also clear that should teachers find the workshops less important, they may see no need to attend them.

5.4.11 Are these workshops useful? Explain

It may happen that lack of understanding of the guidelines may affect how each individual teacher values the importance of the workshops. When asked about the benefits of workshops, one teacher revealed that workshops were not that useful because even the subject advisors did not have much knowledge to workshop teachers on the unclear curriculum. Other teachers found workshops helpful because they, as teachers and subject advisors worked together to solve the existing problems and obtained some explanations and clarity regarding the curriculum. Whether workshops were useful or not may depend on how each individual teacher valued them. It may also depend on the expectations of each teacher. Teachers that still believe in the old way of teaching may find workshops not useful enough for them. As mentioned before, teachers struggled to understand terminology used in the National Curriculum Statement, maybe it was the terminology that they first needed to be orientated on before being trained on how to follow the guidelines and relay the content.

5.4.12 How many hours a week do you teach isiXhosa?

None of the teachers responded to the question. I am not sure whether the question was clear enough to the respondents or they did not respond because they did not know the answer to the question. It is rather unfortunate as this would have added to the learners' concern about not getting enough time.

5.4.13 Is this time sufficient to cover everything?

Although teachers did not respond to the question of how much time is allocated to isiXhosa, two of them responded that time that is allocated for isiXhosa each week is sufficient such that they even have enough time for revision. One teacher did not respond to the question.

5.4.14 Did you cover everything last year?

One teacher did not respond to the question. The other two responded that they finished everything since the curriculum has to be completed by the end of September. The fact that they finish everything before examinations may indicate that learners start the examinations as ready as they were supposed to be. The question is “Why there are still a lot of learners that do not perform well”? Is it the lack of commitment from learners as some of them mentioned or is it the system used by teachers to teach?

5.4.15 Are you involved with curriculum design/ decisions associated with course objectives/ assessment/ marking/ criteria used?

Involving teachers in any kind of decisions made about the curriculum may be a good thing to do since they may be seen as mediators between knowledge and learners. Any decision taken may affect all parties, learners, teachers, and curriculum implementers. One teacher did not respond to the question and the other teacher just responded with “yes”. Although the question did not ask for further explanation, I expected teachers to expand more since all of them were teaching for many years so they may know what was happening in the curriculum. Teacher three’s responses indicated that teachers are fully involved in everything that has to do with the curriculum. The teacher highlighted that all teachers from different schools meet to discuss the curriculum for the following year.

5.5 Discussing Grade 12 results

The section will discuss matric results from 2005 and 2011, i.e. before the NCS and during the National Curriculum Statement. As revealed in chapter two, in 2005, the pass rate was higher. It dropped in 2006 and became worse in 2007. The interesting part is that, although the pass rate decreased in 2007, the number of endorsements increased from 26, 6% in 2006 to 80, 6% in 2007. Learners with distinctions and learners with merit kept on decreasing. Learners are expected to pass with good grades to carry them to higher education institutions.

It has to be taken into consideration that the number of learners with good results decreased, although the pass rate may have increased. It is stated in chapter two that 2008 is the first year of examination under the National Curriculum Statement. The year 2008 was not that impressive in terms of Grade 12 results. Results became worse than 2007, they dropped to 78, 6% from 80,6%. The reason for that may be that learners were the first group to write under the new system of the NCS. Since we have seen that learners also rely heavily on past examination papers, not having any previous examination papers may have an impact on learners' preparedness. On the other hand, teachers themselves were under a lot of pressure, because the DoE anticipated that new curriculum will succeed in addressing the challenges of the previous one. As a result, in 2011 there was some kind of adjustment and the results increased to 82, 9%. Learners passing with good results in 2011 amounted to 38%, which is still very low.

According to the DoE (2008) the number of tasks that have to be assessed at Grade 12 level is five for the first term, five for the second term and four for the third term, which gives a total of 14 tasks. Second and third term tasks have to be an examination. In my opinion, this gives learners a better chance to pass and not just to pass but also to score high. According to the DoE (2008), what is examined in those last two terms has to be examined in the final examinations. Although these tasks only count for 25% towards Grade 12 certificates, I still feel that if learners are as dedicated to their work as they are supposed to be, it may be easier for them to get 75% in the external examination.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary aim of this study was to assess whether the expectations of the National Curriculum Statement, articulated through course objectives and expected outcomes are fulfilled at Grade 12 level with a particular focus on isiXhosa as a home language. This current study revealed that there may be some alignment between the curriculum objectives as well as the assessment. There is however, a critical element missing in this equation, and this has to do with classroom practice. This area is discussed at the end of this chapter.

With the use of questions from previous question papers, the results show that there is alignment between the objectives and assessment. The questions asked, are asked with the aim to produce confident and critically thinking learners as highlighted by the NCS. The results reveal that since the implementation of the NCS, Grade 12 results became poorer until 2011 where the number of passes increased. It may look exciting, but the number of learners with good results was 38%, which was still not satisfactory.

One of the ways in which alignment was demonstrated was through the interrogation of the curriculum objectives and the actual skills that are to be demonstrated through answering questions. As an illustration, the content in the first question is about understanding the constitution of South Africa and democracy in South Africa. The content in the second question is about initiative, without waiting for others to do things for you. The last question is searching for learners' leadership skills. This shows that in terms of content validity, which Martone and Sireci (2009) describe as the degree to which a test appropriately represents the content domain it is intended to measure, the above questions are successful. This answers the question of alignment between objectives and assessment, as far as this portion of the examination goes.

According to DoE (2008) writing (and presenting) is a powerful instrument of communication that allows learners to construct and communicate thoughts and ideas coherently. Frequent writing (and presenting) practice across a variety of contexts, tasks and subject fields enables learners to communicate functionally and creatively. The aim is to produce competent, versatile writers who will be able to use their skills to develop and present appropriate written, visual and multi-media texts for a variety of purposes. Although it is highlighted that learners are given tools to prepare for or to remind them about the examinations, it seems that the tools are not enough since there are still learners claiming that they are not given clarity about examination preparations. Perhaps teachers could also keep reminding learners since some of the learners had other issues to think about, specifically their poor living conditions. This issuing of diaries and study guides from the DoE and visits by subject advisors somehow show some level of involvement from the side of the DoE. This shows a good communication between the DoE and schools, although the teachers' responses did not confirm this speculation.

We expected more learners doing well considering the fact that the subject is their home language. The above comment does not undermine individual learners' reasons given for low performance but to highlight that there is still a lot that needs to be done to improve learners' performance. As a point of reference, one of learners' responses for poor performance is that there is not enough time to prepare since the gap between learning areas is very small. Perhaps the time between learning areas needs to be revised and one needs to see if it is in fact reasonable enough. This may be done to avoid the imbalance of time between learning areas, examinations and also to avoid poor performance that may be caused by this inequality of time. If the team fails to do so, then some learning areas may not be given enough time to prepare and that can lead to poor results.

There is a reason for every learner's performance, be it high or low. Some learners did well due to their commitment to their studies whereas others did badly because of a lack of commitment. Teachers try their best to encourage learners and help them do well in their studies throughout the process of learning. Some learners were facing personal challenges that were beyond their control and could not give their best during the examinations. With the help teachers get from the DoE, they work hard to make a success of learners' education.

On the question of guidelines, could the unclear guidelines be the cause of poor performance of learners? If teachers are not clear about guidelines, then how appropriately could they be on passing knowledge to learners? Attending workshops quarterly appears to be enough for teachers to understand all that is not clear to them but if teachers are still not clear about the curriculum, maybe those conducting workshops should consider other alternatives that may help teachers to understand everything that they need to understand.

Although there is still more to be done by teachers and everyone that is involved with the curriculum, it looks like a lot has been done to make the curriculum work. It is clear that curriculum implementers have worked hard to align curriculum objectives, the teaching of language and assessment of language, particularly isiXhosa. This is shown in the way questions in examinations are asked, questions are asked in a way that allows learners to show the expected skills. This is proved by the fact that teachers teach according to what is expected by the DoE and also majority of learners seem satisfied with the way they are taught. The fact that there are still learners who seem to be left behind could indicate that special precautions may need to be considered to accommodate those learners.

On the question of validity and reliability of the assessment tools, the findings of this study show that in many cases these objectives align very well with the assessment. The assessment tools that teachers used to assess are reliable and valid. According to this study, teachers play a very big role in the development and design of curriculum objectives. The workshops that are scheduled to discuss curriculum and assessment have proven to be very helpful to teachers even to the majority of those teachers who find difficulties in understanding the curriculum although the claim is that there are still teachers who do not benefit from the workshops. Some teachers understand the necessity of course objectives and some still do not understand.

The study discovered that besides academic challenges, learners are also faced with personal challenges, which include going to school on empty stomach and the responsibility of helping to put food on the table as young as they are. Although there are feeding programmes, those programmes do not take away the thinking that they are from a poor background. The year 2008 was a very challenging year for matric learners since they were the first to have come through the system of OBE curriculum. Not only learners were affected but teachers and even curriculum implementers too. It was the time to assess whether the NCS is really effective for South Africa. An analysis of examinations over the years revealed that from 2008 to 2010 matric results became a concern since pass rates continued to drop. In 2008, 78, 6% of learners passed matric in the Western Cape. Only 33.0% of these learners had grades that were good enough to register for a university degree. It was revealed that in 2009 the percentage dropped to 75,7% with 31,9% of learners who could register for a degree. In 2010 there was a slightly increase in the pass rate to 76, 8% with a slight decrease in learners who performed well for a degree to 31,5%. The study revealed that in 2011 results showed high improvement up to 82,9% pass rates with an increase of learners with good results to go to university. The increase was 38%. Looking at the first three years before the NCS

examination and the first three years during NCS, there is an unconvincing decrease of learners' performance, regardless of the fluctuating pass rates. According to Chisholm (2003), findings show that South Africa's learner achievement remained exceptionally poor despite curriculum change. Chisholm (2003) was highly critical of C2005 and its associated dimensions, particularly the proscription against the use of textbooks and the nature of outcomes-based assessment methods. Chisholm (2003) further argues that the message of the PEI Report was that C2005 was not improving the capacity of learner achievement, failure due to personal reasons. Some learners mentioned poor living conditions whereby some of them had to sell electricity for living before they could even start looking at their books. Coming from school tired and have to find the ways of living can limit chances of learners to perform well and achieve what they would like to achieve. This shows that poor living conditions may lead to poor listening skills as one learner mentioned that they got poor results because they were poor in listening because they had to think about their living conditions while they were supposed to be listening to their teachers.

Considering the teaching time (4.5 hours per week) allocated for home language for Grade 10 to 12, and in that short time, learners were expected to have acquired learning, listening, reading, writing, presenting and speaking skills. Is this possible in this timeframe? Is there any possibility that the assessors will consider the shortness of time, or will they assume that the teaching was done at the given time regardless of what has been covered and what has not been covered due to the shortage of time? Planners may consider not to be specific about what time to be spent on what skill, the time allocated to each learning area is enough, let teachers decide on how to spend that given time.

It was also discovered that some learners failed due to poor reading and listening skills. It could be possible that the time given to prepare learners' reading skills is not enough. Learners need to be reminded about the importance of reading at home during their spare time. It cannot be assumed that because they are in Grade 12 they have to know that they must read, the fact that they may not have the time due to their living conditions should also not be undermined. Ignoring the question of time allocated for isiXhosa home language could be an indication that some teachers do not know the specific time, therefore they do not work according to the allocated time. Maybe teachers should just be given deadlines to finish what is expected of them to finish, in which case they will be able to set their own time. That will make them work comfortable not forgetting that learners should acquire knowledge.

Examinations questions were asked using also what is called communicative approach. According to DoE (2008), the communicative approach in languages provides learners with extensive opportunities to acquire the language skills necessary to perform certain required functions in society. It is further stated that the learner is provided with many opportunities to practise or produce the language by solving problems and interacting in social or practical situations. As stated in DoE (2008), Grade 12 learners are expected to show progress by being able to write argumentative essays, meaning that they are expected to have progressed from Grade 10 and 11 work, whereby they were expected to write narrative and descriptive essays only. This kind of a question asked in the examination encourages learners to be more creative, independent and analytical rather than to just give what they think is a relevant answer to the question. It is after all one of the objectives of curriculum and assessment policy statement that in a home language, learners will express and justify orally and in writing, their own ideas, views and emotions confidently in order to become independent and analytical thinkers. The way that the questions are asked give learners a chance to use the language and their imagination to find out more about themselves and the world around them,

DoE (2011), enabling them to express their experiences and findings about the world orally and in writing. The questions are also asked in a way that encourages teachers to be more cautious when teaching and assessing. They should be careful not to give learners work that is below their level (grade). Should that happen, learners might not get enough challenge and that could lead to a high risk of low performance during the time of assessment. The argument follows one of learners reasons that they are sometimes given work that is below their level. Questions from curriculum assessors could be so challenging to the learners who were taught in a different approach that was below their standard.

Finally, the findings of this study show that Grade 12 results were higher and then they became lower and lower since the beginning of the NCS. This could be an indication that the new curriculum, NCS is not completely successful. An increase in learners who scored good marks for university, may not be seen as the beginning of good education in South Africa. On the other hand considering learners' requirements for Bachelor's degree the NCS needs to be revised. According to teachers' and a majority of learners' perspectives, a lot has been done to keep these two components aligned. Help was given to both teachers and learners to make them understand curriculum objectives. The majority of learners revealed that examinations always asked what they knew and expected, there were no surprises. Every examination question that is used as an example in the study is asked in a way that would make learners to show their understanding of curriculum objectives. Given that there is an indication of alignment, where do we go wrong?

One of the shortcomings of this study had to do with the lack of classroom practice observation, interview with the teachers as well as interview with the subject advisors. In order to get a fuller picture of curriculum—classroom practice—assessment alignment, one has to involve all those involved in the process. It is therefore recommended, that future work in this area, must consider incorporating all the participants. Secondly, although teachers

were available to complete questionnaires, very few availed themselves, also none agreed to interviews. It was therefore very difficult following up on some of their responses. We hope that a general survey of practices amongst teachers may begin to address this concern.

Finally, whereas we found alignment between curriculum objectives and assessment, one of the issues has to do with the uniformity. Whereas we treat Home Languages equally, there are some language specific areas, given the fact that we are developing African languages that may require to be designed specifically for African languages. It will be interesting to see, from a translation point of view, how curriculum objectives, based on English as Home Language, totally overlap with those of isiXhosa, or Sesotho as an example. I believe a study that looks into those issues might find the link that we are missing in our equation.

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